

Crikey!
3
£3.99

Crikey!

The Great British Comics Magazine!



ISSN 1754-954X



9 771754 954000 >



The Spectre from *Smash* 152, December 1968.

a humorous remark, such as 'Wizard Prang is ... All At Sea'.

Although most of the strips were either superhero or purely humorous, 'The Spectre' was an adventure strip that took things in a very different direction. The Spectre was a secret agent whose cover was that he had apparently been killed during a mission but then continued to fight crime by using an array of gadgets that made it appear he was the ghost of the missing agent. So his opponents were terrified to find that if they shot him he didn't die (a bullet-proof raincoat was the trick there). And he had a secret underground hideout, from which he would covertly and unexpectedly emerge, or disappear into, under cover of an artificial fog, to give the impression he was coming and going from the spirit world.

Sadly, most of these strips didn't survive the relaunch of *Smash* in 1969. Notable losses were 'The Cloak' and 'The Man from BUNGLE', as the popularity of spy spoofs faded; in 1968 even *The Man from UNCLE* television series had been cancelled. 'The Spectre' was another which was lost in the reshuffle; as was the horror spoof 'Grimly Feendish', a cross between the popular TV comedies *The Munsters* and *The Addams Family*.

Other strips which didn't survive included 'Sammy Shrink', a humour strip about a boy who is only two inches tall, and 'Ronnie Rich' (the richest kid in the world, who stands to inherit a fortune if only he can get rid of the money he already has). Each week Ronnie



Master of the Marsh from *Smash* Christmas Special (December 1969).

would spend his every last penny in some reckless or extravagant way, only to have his scheme backfire and make him richer than ever. He never did get his hands on the fortune.

Power Cut

Odhams had launched five *Power Comics* in 1966, only to close four of them fairly quickly, merging each in turn into *Smash*. Obviously those comics lost money, or they wouldn't have been closed. But in a limited market such as the UK, why did they take such a big risk as to launch five new titles, if it was so obvious the market could only support one?

Ultimately, they were not even able to keep *Smash* itself going, and had to sell it to IPC. The immediate dropping of the Marvel strips by IPC suggests that part at least of the problem was the cost of the licensing fees demanded by Marvel for the right to use their strips.

Perhaps the losses incurred on the four *Power Comics* which had failed so quickly were so crippling that their losses ultimately pulled *Smash* down as well. It clearly couldn't generate enough income to pay off the group's accumulated losses, except by selling it off.

This is supported by the fact that even *Smash* was only a limited success. It was clearly on shaky ground, for IPC made massive changes to it in 1969, not just dropping the Marvel superhero strips but dropping many other strips too, and introducing new strips, a new cover feature, and free gifts.

The New Old Smash

When the ownership of *Smash* passed to IPC in the spring of 1969 the revamped comic contained a mixture of new British strips, which were mostly humorous, together with reprints from *Lion* such as 'Eric the Viking' - but strictly no superhero strips.

And not only were all the superheroes lost in the changeover, but the comic itself changed utterly.

As a symbol of the change a new cover feature appeared entitled 'Warriors of the World', replacing Leo Baxendale's 'The Swots and the Blots' (a reworking of his famous Bash Street kids strip). Happily 'The Swots ...' survived, although relegated to the middle pages.

After 52 issues the 'Warriors of the World' cover feature ended, to be replaced by 'The Thirteen Tasks of Simon Test'. Each week's cover would feature a full-page splash advertising that week's Task, which Simon Test would be undertaking in a new adventure strip on the inside pages. Simon Test proved so popular that when he completed the original 13-week series (one task each week) he was given a new series of adventures, extending his hold on the cover indefinitely.

Initially, however, the lead strip was 'Master of the Marsh', a series in which Patchman, a hermit who lived in the East Anglian fens, became sports master at Marshside Secondary School. He was the only teacher who could control the kids, a group of little hooligans known as 'the monsters of the Marsh' (a male version of the fourth form at St Trinian's).

'Master ...' began with humorous stories about the

attempts of Knocker Reeves, the worst of the 'monsters', to get the better of the new teacher. It eventually transpired, however, that Patchman was secretly the guardian of a collection of relics left behind by Hereward the Wake, who had fought the Norman invaders in the fens during the 11th Century. In this respect the strip had an occasional tendency to veer-off in a science fiction and fantasy direction.

Another new adventure serial with humorous overtones was Salono Lopez's classic 'The Amazing Adventures of Janus Stark'. Stark was an escapologist in Victorian London who appeared to be simply an unusual act on the music hall stage, but who secretly used his extraordinary abilities to investigate crime. He had an unusually flexible bone structure and could squeeze out of an astonishing variety of tight situations, thanks to the training he received in childhood from his mentor, Blind Largo.

Another long-running success in the new *Smash* was 'Bunsen's Burner', an adventure yarn with comedic overtones. Ben Bunsen was the owner of a vintage car known as 'the Burner' because it was so old it was steam-driven! As with an old-fashioned steam train, it had a boiler that had to be stoked, and it ran on coal. Ben and his pal had to drive the Burner around the world, as a condition of Ben inheriting his uncle's fortune; but a rival claimant was secretly out to stop them.

'The Battle of Britain' featured secret agent Simon Kane who fought against the usurper Baron Rudolph, who had

Erik the Viking & The Battle of Britain from *Smash* Christmas Special 1969.



HIS SPORTING LORDSHIP



(Above): His Sporting Lordship from SMASH Christmas Special (December 1969). The Rebel Robot from SMASH Christmas Special (December 1969) and the football mad The Touchline Tearaways.

seized control of Britain by the use of a secret weapon. This emitted a sound wave that paralysed anyone who wasn't protected against it. Rudolph had set up a police state; and his organisation was similar in its structure and uniforms to England in the Middle Ages, around the time of King John.

Runaway success

'Rebels on the Run' was initially an adventure story about three brothers who's surname was Rebel, who ran away from an orphanage to avoid being split up. But after a few months on the run, the strip took an astonishing turn and became a science fiction serial,

with the boys discovering that their late father's mind had been preserved within the brain of a robot.

The robot became the boys' unofficial guardian as they embarked on a quest to track down the criminal who had murdered their real father. Much later, the man responsible turned out to be a Government undercover agent.

A very popular feature of the re-launch was the humorous 'His Sporting Lordship'. Henry Nobbins had been a building site labourer until he

inherited the title of Earl of Ranworth and five million pounds. Before he could touch the money, however, he had to perform a number of sporting feats and in the process evade the nefarious attentions of Mr Parkinson, a rival claimant to the fortune.

Another offering with a sporting theme was the wrestling strip 'King of the Ring' featuring Ken King, a champion of the grunt-'n'-grapple game. At first the strip suffered somewhat in the credibility department because of the fact that King's manager had the rather unlikely name of Blarney Stone. Even the *Smash* staff must have thought this a bit much, as they chucked Blarney out of the series part-way through, and substituted a new manager with a less silly name.

One or two all-humour strips were introduced with the re-launch. One of these was 'The Touchline Tearaways', featuring three mad keen supporters of Grimshaw Rovers, a totally useless professional football team. As it was made up entirely of ailing and decrepit players it was perpetually in danger of being relegated. Each week the Tearaways would execute some scheme from the touchline to help the team win that week's match, usually involving a battle against officials from the League (who, not unnaturally, wanted to put a stop to the Tearaways well-intentioned cheating on behalf of the Rovers).

The Touchline Tearaways



THE REBBEL ROBOT



Sporting strips became the order of the day. New strips with a sporting theme included not only the above but also the humorous football strip 'The World-Wide Wanderers', about a League football team composed of eleven players drawn from eleven different countries. Possibly not so funny today.

Football manager Harry Kraft was a passenger on a ship passing through the Suez Canal. Ships from all over the world called there, and the crews conducted impromptu football matches to while away the time in port. Due to some foul-up or other, some of the crews had been stranded there; and constant football practice (as there was nothing else to do) had caused them to develop fantastic footballing skills. He shipped eleven of them, from as many different countries, back to England; and they used their highly unorthodox individual skills to play as a team in the old First Division.

World War Two strips were also featured in the new *Smash*. 'Sgt Rock - Special Air Service' was one of the strongest, and also one of the few non-humorous strips. It was used as a setting for war stories featuring paratroopers; and much of the time Sgt Rock only served the strip as a narrator, opening and closing stories that featured other characters. It became more tales-of-the-parachute-regiment than tales of Sgt Rock himself, presumably as a device for reprinting old war stories from other comics.

A very short-lived strip, which featured for only a few weeks after the re-launch, was the spoof World War Two strip, 'Nutt and Bolt, the Men From W.H.E.E.Z.E.' This was a reprint of an old strip, possibly from *Lion*. Its title certainly suggests it was born out of the earlier television popularity of *The Man From U.N.C.L.E.* It featured an English scientist, Professor Nutt; a boffin who invented secret weapons for use against the Germans; and his Army 'minder', one Sgt 'Lightning' Bolt.

A Valiant Death

After two years with IPC, *Smash* merged into *Valiant* in 1971, although the *Smash Annual* continued to appear for some years afterwards. Some strips survived into the new *Valiant*, such as 'His Sporting Lordship' and 'The Swots and the Blotts', but most were lost.

Even with all of the changes IPC made, the new *Smash* had lasted only two years before being merged into *Valiant*. It must have been only marginally profitable in 1969, to decline into oblivion so quickly. IPC didn't even have the burden of the accumulated debts that were incurred on the four other Power Comics, so the situation must have been pretty bad.

The dates suggest that it was IPC's policy to give changes 12 months to bed down, then review the situation and take further action if needed. But the writing was on the wall for *Smash* because, ultimately, even IPC's flagship, *Valiant*, did not survive.

What it did leave behind, however, was a range of great characters, some superb artwork and many inventive storylines. Enough to keep collectors busy for many years to come. ●



Swots & Blotts and Sgt Rock both from *Smash Christmas Special* (December 1969).



Hammering Out the Horror

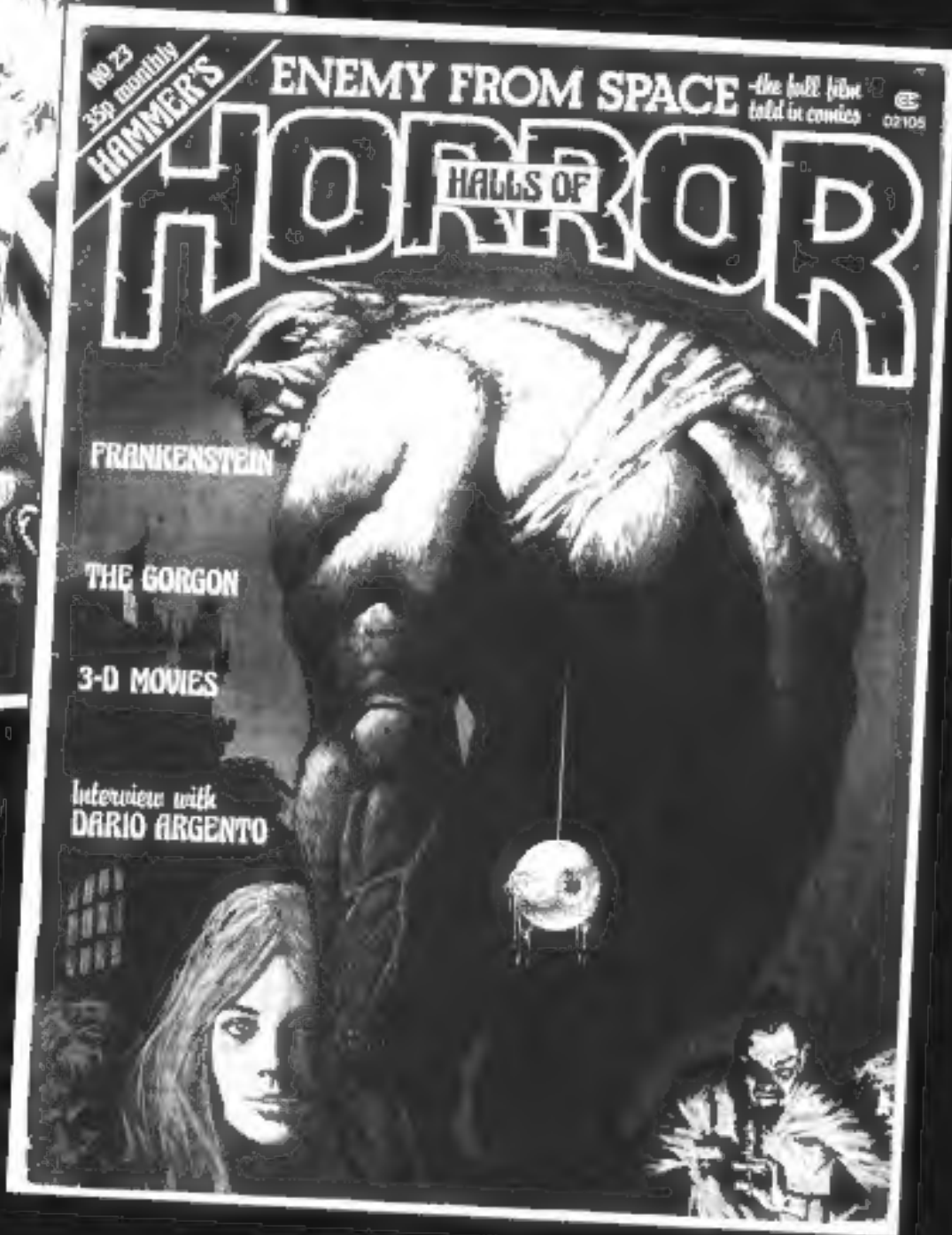
Being thirteen questions of Gothic enquiry from Master Mark Saunders, magazine archivist and recorder of conversation, and Mister Desmond Skinn, an innovator, raconteur and erstwhile editor of the House of Horror periodical.

Mark: Did you and your editorial team decide which films to adapt, or did Hammer suggest titles to you? Did you have access to ALL the Hammer films you wanted to adapt?

Dez: I chose the movies to adapt.

I started with their initial '50s Dracula and Frankenstein as obvious foundations, although the lateness of the artwork for Curse of Frankenstein led to it being serialised across issues 2 and 3. Chris Wicking (Hammer script editor) and managing director Michael Carreras were my contacts. Working in Columbia-Warner House (only three doors away from Hammer House, in Wardour Street, Soho) meant I could liaise as much (or as little!) as I wished. Usually I liaised with Chris over lunchtime drinks in a local pub and with Michael over evening drinks in his office. It was a tough life.

We'd be supplied with the script and cans of film usually, so we could screen it (me, the writer and the artist) in Columbia-Warner's top floor preview room. It was excellent because,



being a private viewing suite, it had small desk lights and an intercom to the projection booth, so we could rerun any bits we wanted as artist and writer frantically took notes.

The pitch I put to Michael was that the magazine and the film production company could have a great interaction, a symbiosis. We'd help them by promoting their new movies and they'd help us by providing access to their old ones. Sadly, despite the stillborn *Nessie* and *Vampirella*, the only genre movie they made after we launched was the problem-riddled and confusing *To The Devil a Daughter*. Their final picture being *Mutiny on the Buses* (not a cert for adapting!)

Apparently Michael had been approached several times previously with publishers wanting to produce Hammer magazines and had turned them all down. I think he liked my take on using comics to dramatically capture the atmosphere and provide a better narrative flow than a limited number of film stills could. It was helped by the fact that Chris turned out to be a regular reader of stuff I was already producing too! I think his blessing sealed the deal.

I assume your pool of artists came from their involvement on Quality Publications, or were artists brought in from elsewhere?

My team of creators had come with me in part from Fleetway (Steve Moore, Steve Parkhouse, Jim Baikie, Les Lilley) plus through friendship and fanzines (Paul Neary, Dave Gibbons, Angus McKie, Brian Bolland, Martin Asbury).

John Bolton was a newcomer. His first strip (a Van Helsing in #4) was in pencil because he couldn't ink. It was such a tough job for the repro house that I told him he'd have to learn to ink his work quickly if he was to make a living in the industry. He did, and produced the splendid *Dracula Prince of Darkness* for #6, two months later! Similarly with David (Quatermass) Lloyd and David (The Mummy) Jackson. While both continued to work with me on *Warrior*, they were newcomers.

David Lloyd had been sending samples every few weeks for six months before a strip came up which I believe suited his 1950s, almost woodcut, style. Brian Lewis I knew through his stunning (albeit dated) *Jet Ace Logan* strips from the 1960s. His sample showed he could adopt the Spanish/Jim Warren 1970s approach so he became a mainstay.

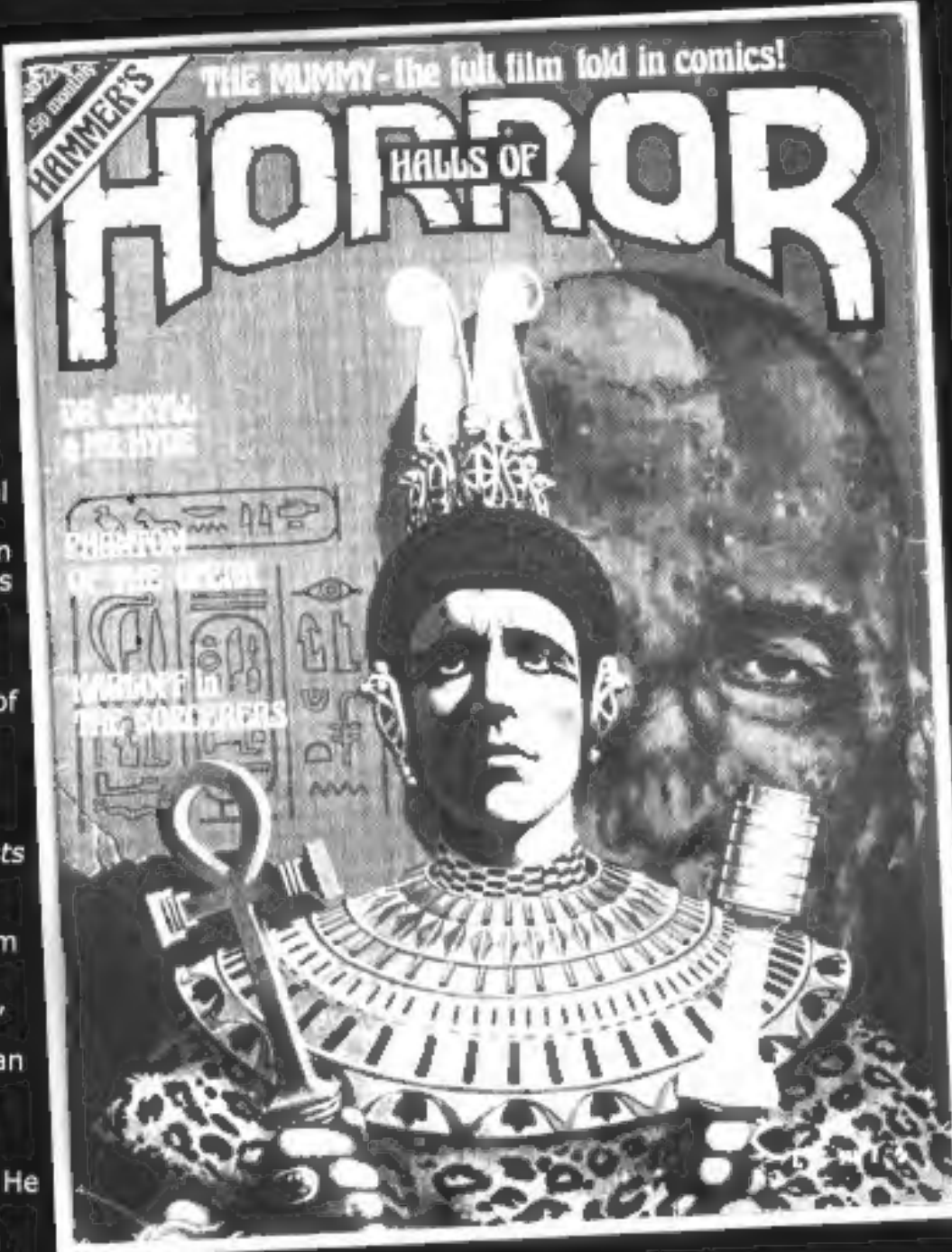
Did the artists choose which stories they worked on? If not, how was the work allocated?

I chose the artist based on the script's requirements. I tried to produce a mix, rather than overdo the key Hammer characters, hence the bizarre SF strip, *Moon Zero Two* (#5, by Paul Neary) *Seven Golden Vampires* (#4, Brian Lewis) and *Dracula Prince of Darkness* (#6, John Bolton).

Were the artists able to see the films they were adapting, or did they work mainly from the scripts? Some of the adaptations differ in style from the films, as they appeared to have been based solely on the scripts, while others were almost photo-realistic, for example John Bolton's. Or was it perhaps a combination of techniques?

The artists got finished scripts with any refs we could lay our hands on. When adapting *Kronos* (#19), as there was no print available, Ian Gibson and I actually paid to go to a cinema in Portobello Road to see it. That was about all the refs Ian had!

I believe the artists were given the 'first draft' scripts to work from, which perhaps made the strips more 'definitive' expressions of the original intentions of the



screenwriters? Were the artists working from actual scripts, or did Hammer provide you with transcriptions?

Sometimes we got finished scripts, pink pages and all (with the day's rewrites), other times we had the advantage of working with the original shooting script (*Vampire Circus*) before the censors got to work.

Who had the idea for Van Helsing's Terror Tales (VHTT), and was using Peter Cushing's likeness something he had to agree to?

Van Helsing's Terror Tales was my chance to both try out artists and to put something original in the mag. It's hardly an original concept, and one I repeated for *Doctor Who*, with 'Tales from the Tardis' and suchlike. I feel it balances out a comic/feature magazine, to start with the major strip, follow it with related features and genre movie news, then finish off with a short EC-style horror strip.

That had nothing to do with Hammer, except stealing the Peter Cushing character as a host. A few years later I was actually discussing with Richard O'Brien the idea of starting a title called Riff-Raff's *Shock Treatment*, taking his *Rocky Horror Show* character as a host, and the title of the sequel as the main logo. Van Helsing style strips, but with no major feature. Maybe that's why we never did it!

Likenesses? In the States you have the copyright on your image, your face. Over here it's different. While I met Cushing, Lee, Pitt and the rest, they really had no say over their faces being used. I've the greatest respect for the tolerance required by the US editors of the *Star Wars*, *Buffy* and *Xena* titles. They seem to have to go

on panels together and make The Odd Couple look like identical twins. But there was a wonderful enthusiasm, shared by almost everybody which bonded us all together.

Why did the title change throughout the magazine's run? (The House of Hammer #1-18, Hammer's House of Horror #19-20, Hammer's Halls of Horror #21-23, and Halls of Horror #24-30) Did this, as I have assumed, reflect a gradual move away from a focus on Hammer, and more to horror in general?

Title change? OK, the big one. I'd met Jim Warren a couple of times. I was editing the UK *Mad* and *Tarzan* as well as *HoH* at the time, and about to start *Starburst* for my own company (I did it because my bosses didn't want another genre film mag, as well as my office's output including poster mags, *HoH* and the film-tie in *Mad* they also had *Cinema X* and *Cinema Blue*, put together by *HoH* news hound Tony Crawley). But they were interested in me reworking *Eerie* and *Creepy* for the UK, as - with Hammer about to produce *Vampirella* - the tie-in to Warren was a natch.

Now, Warren owned the scripts to his books, his Spanish partner Josef Toutain assembled the art. They each produced editions for their own territories, but the UK was a problem, so they decided to share the royalty. I somehow forgot the 2:00pm meeting and was sinking copious amounts of alcohol with Chris Wicking, celebrating a particularly good issue we'd received copies of that day.

Rolling into the offices around 2:30, I was hurried into a meeting with Warren, Toutain and my own MD and sales director. I was asked what I thought about a UK *Spirit* title, and, Yorkshire lack of tact exacerbated by too many bevies, said exactly what I



thought. As Warren was up for the entire 100% of this one he wasn't too pleased that I thought it was a time-locked piece of US hocus, beautifully produced, but I couldn't see it being commercial over here.

Dinner with Warren that evening didn't go too well, despite Peter Cushing joining us (they both favoured Browns Hotel when staying in London and it had been a pure coincidence that Cushing walked in while we were in the bar). *HOH* had only just started and while Warren was very flattering about the idea of me reworking his *Eerie*, *Creepy* and *Vampirella* titles, he wasn't mad about *HOH*. "I'm sure you'll be a great editor for my titles, but this horror mag of yours...You're just number 27." Not surprisingly I looked puzzled. "Look, 26 other guys have copied my title. You're just #27" he added, referring to Forry Ackermann's *Famous Monsters*, which he published. "I put photos of these copycat people on a board to throw darts at," he added (I sent him a 10x8" glossy the next day).

So, when he later discovered we were to export 200,000 copies a month of a US edition, he made his move. The US distributor, Independent News (I think they were called) didn't like the title *House of Hammer*. They said it sounded like a Do-It-Yourself woodwork kind of magazine, Duuh. So, retaining the *HoH* acronym and sacrificing the original name to gain a huge sales boost, I switched to *House of Horror*, with the Hammer mention a smaller corner emblem. *HHoH*, I guess, really. Warren had been interviewed a few months earlier in a UK fanzine, *Comic Media News*, and was on their comp copies list. They released the news of our US edition being about to ship. Apparently he read it because in a matter of weeks he produced an ashcan compilation of old *Famous Monsters* material, called it *House of Horror* and got the legal requirement of 500 copies in stores to

VAN HELSING'S TERROR TALES

CORDELL WAS A LIEGE. WITH NOTHING LEFT TO LOSE, HE HAD TO WIN HIS WAY OF LIFE AND SOON, HELED FOR MURDER AND VIOLENCE, HE SPENT HIS DAYS PLAYING HIS LITTLE SCHEMES. HE'D ALREADY TAKEN HIS FIRST STEP, TOUCHED BY

THE HAND OF FATE



retain the HoH logostyle, the best I could come up with was *Halls of Horror*, finally dropping the Hammer's part when we relaunched it in 1981. As an aside, Milton Subotsky was always jealous of the Hammer mag and felt his Amicus company deserved similar treatment. But Attic of Amicus somehow doesn't have the same ring to it.

In issue #20, you stated (in your editorial) that a strip of *The Devil Rides Out* was in preparation by Doug Moench, John Bolton & Pat Wright, Chris Wicking was working on *Dr Jekyll & Sister Hyde*, & Paul Neary was working on *Revenge of Frankenstein*. Were any of these strips completed? Do they lurk somewhere waiting for someone to print them? (Were they ever printed elsewhere?)

No they weren't printed, but we did tie up the Klove/Shandor/Van Helsing mess a few years later, as a tie in to the continuing Shandor strip



secure trademark on the name.

The first we knew was when we received the legal paperwork. By then 200,000 of a 'Best of' compilation of #1-18 were halfway between Finland and New York, and 200,000 of #19 with a US price cover black plate change were being printed to be out there a month later.

I couldn't see the problem, he was producing Forry's photo funnies, with Universal horror as backbone, we were doing comics versions of UK Hammer flicks. But he was a clever guy. He'd beaten us before we even started over there. The lawyer's letter was full of cease-and-desist demands, maintaining his HoH was a well-established title which a great deal of money had been spent on and how could we dare infringe his copyright. So, we had a serious problem. You can't simply pulp 400,000 magazines and stay in business (unless you're DC). I checked out opaque printing. There was a company which could block out the small 'House of' box in the middle of the logo on each copy, and replace it with any other words I chose. Thus changing the title and avoiding any legal hassle with Jimbo. But it would be time consuming and aesthetically displeasing. So, I let Warren know how much it would cost us to avoid infringing his copyright and suggested that instead of us giving the money to a US printer we pay it to him to licence 'his' title for the already printed copies. We were going to put it out anyway, so perhaps he hadn't beaten us after all.

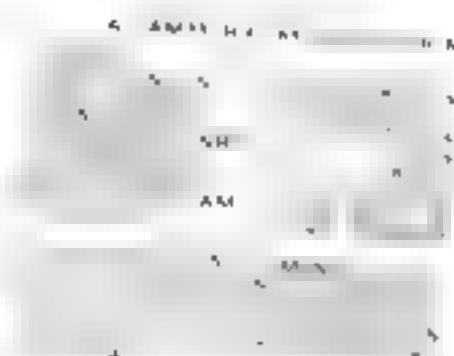
He took the money, but I then had to change the title again, so we could continue over there. Still wanting to

in *Warrior*. (I added the H to Sandor, from *Dracula Prince of Darkness*, because I just loved the movie's Van Helsing substitute and wanted to make it our own. A monk on horseback with a shotgun makes a stirring image. In the same way, we (Steve Moore and I) took a theme out of *Doctor Who* to develop *Abslom Daak*. The idea in both cases was that if the title (HoH or *Doctor Who*) ceased, we could still use Shandor and Abslom Daak in other titles, so not everything would have been wasted. Hence Shandor in *Warrior*.

CAPTAIN

KRONOS

Vampire Hunter



titles in the early 80s. Also, after Hammer Films, the hack and slash version of horror may have suited a Fangoria style colour magazines but they weren't really my taste. I prefer my horror to be gothic fantasy, not sick sexist sadism. Or maybe I'm biased.

And finally - what are your thoughts now, looking back on HoH?

Looking back?

Fascinating. I think most of the strips hold up remarkably well, with creators having, in some cases, produced their best work there. The feature layouts were pretty basic but that was somebody else's job! I think the enthusiasm and tender loving care really shows now I can look back and read them somewhat objectively.

I think you can see a pattern clearly (and the development of a team of creators), one which was a template for Doctor Who Weekly, then split into two with Starburst and Warrior, one all features, one all comics; but both somehow having a similar feel to them. It was an important title for me, my first real hands-on creation for the newsstands, and I'm still proud of it. And relieved it doesn't embarrass me.

Many thanks, Dez

After issue #24 (a reprint issue dedicated to the late Brian Lewis), the style and tone of HoH changed under the new editorial staff. Your involvement changed from Editor to 'Publisher/Editorial Director'. From that point on HoH seemed to go downhill fast, its strip content reducing down to half a film adaptation per issue, and no strip at all in the final (30th) issue. It survived the loss of your editorship by only six issues. Why did your editorship end?

Sorry you felt HoH went downhill after #24; thanks for the backhanded compliment. New editor Dave Reader was maybe a more drastic man than me. I fear I've always been crassly commercial. I'm a comic man who wanted to use Hammer as a way to sell comics to an older audience. To me Hammer was a vehicle for comics, not the other way round. Budgetary restrictions and lack of direction caused the death of the comic strips, with only the ones previously completed appearing in the second series. But the covers were pretty cool, weren't they!

My editorship ended because I was busy with other



Each issue of *Crikey!* highlights the career and work of a major British comic artist. This time we look at the realistic fantasy work of

Don Lawrence

By Glenn B Fleming

It's difficult to believe that almost half a century has passed since we kids were treated to the majesty of the strip *The Rise and Fall of the Trigan Empire* and the artwork of the late, lamented Don Lawrence. For 11 years Lawrence illustrated writer and co-creator Mike Butterworth's strips, telling the tale of a long lost civilisation from the planet Eлектon.

As the story unfolded we saw a gyroscope-shaped spacecraft tumbling out of control through Earth's atmosphere, finally crashing into a Florida swamp. The crew is long dead but aboard the ship are thousands of books - an entire library, written in an alien language. Scholars from all over the world descend upon the United States in an effort to translate the unearthly language of the books in a quest to reveal the secrets of this perhaps long dead civilisation. One of these men dedicates his life to the cause and, when he is old and grey, finally cracks the code. What the chronicles reveal is one of the most outstanding sagas ever told in the medium of comics, running eventually to over 1,000 pages.

(Left) A staggering scene from *Erik the Viking* - beautifully capturing composition and storytelling - and just look at those horses! (Smash *The Trigan Empire*, (below), Lawrence went onto produce almost a



Empire Building

The Trigan Empire began in *Ranger*, the often under-rated comic-magazine hybrid from the mid-60s. *Ranger* was to last only nine months before merging with *Look and Learn* another educational title but with less emphasis on technology and boys' interests. The Trigan Empire continued in *Look and Learn* until 1982, enjoying its success as one of the longest running features in the history of British comics.

Since exploding onto the comics scene a those years ago, The Empire has been reprinted with varying degrees of fidelity, yet there is still no full and complete account of the epic. Panels have been cut from some of the original stories and even entire pages deleted. The lettering has on occasion switched from hand to mechanical lettering. It certainly may have saved a few pages and therefore a few pennies but it didn't help the narrative.

Fortunately for the editors, there never were fixed titles established for the original Trigan stories and therefore the same story could be reprinted in different books under different titles, leading to confusion and some might say a title

ing Lawrence's sense of
th, May 1970) (Right) After
1,000 pages of *Storm*



(Above). Lawrence drew a superb version of *Tarzan*. This page appeared in *TV21&Jo90*, January 1970

deception. Thankfully, the parts of the Trigan Empire that were drawn by Don Lawrence have been reprinted in luxury hardback limited editions in their original form with no editing. A number of partly completed and unpublished comic strips were published in the Netherlands.

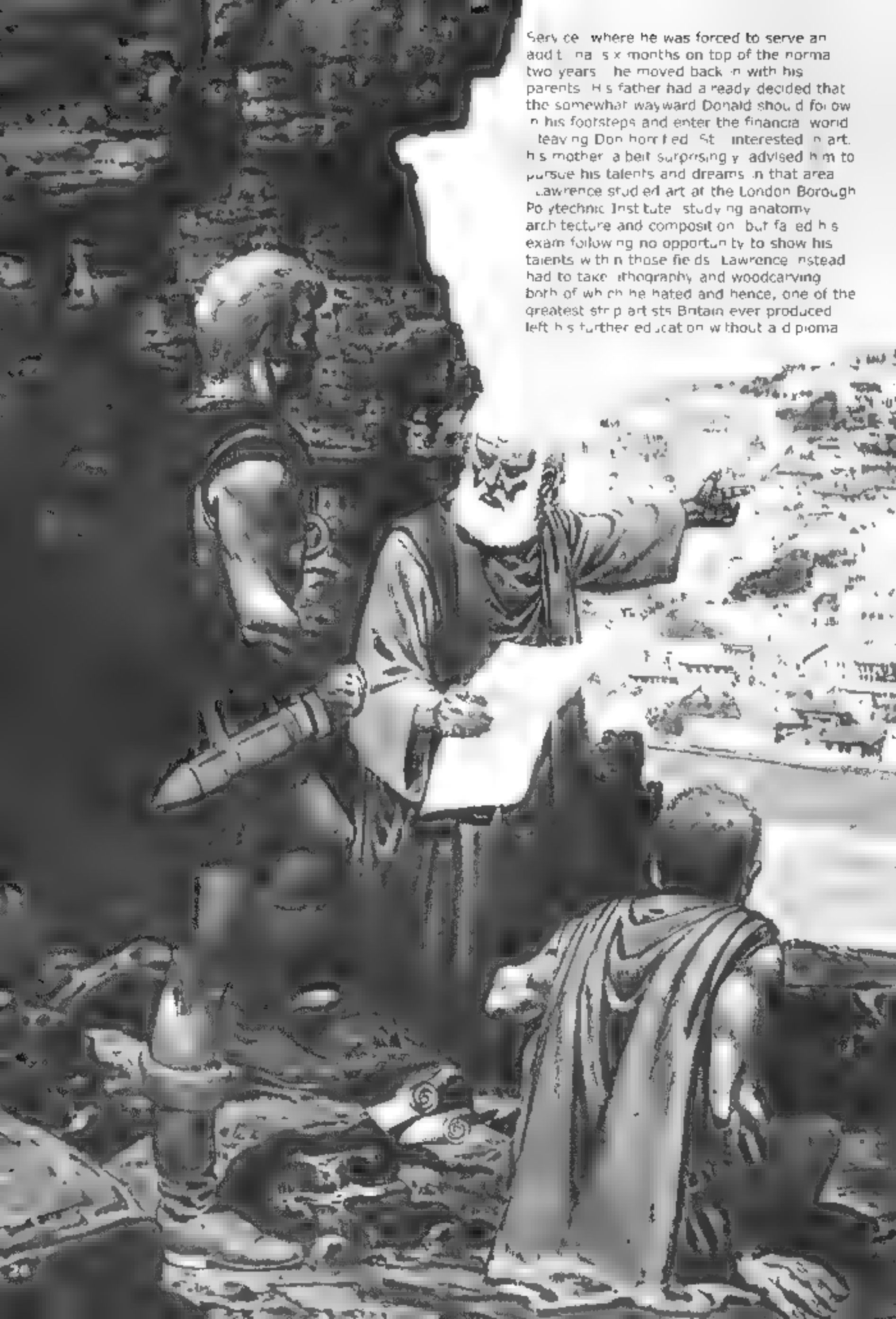
At that said, at the time of publication in late 1965 I was only interested in the artwork. That art was some of the best comic art this little boy had seen and is still some of the best he has seen to date. Don Lawrence's vistas were stunning, of truly biblical proportions and I have yet to see a comic artist depict stone and sand as well as Lawrence.

Before the Empire

Donald Southam Lawrence was born on 17 November 1928 in the suburb of London, East Sheen, the third child of Nellie and Herbert Lawrence. His other siblings were sister Pamela and brother Raymond.

Life in general was difficult for Don. Like millions of kids his age he was evacuated during the war, seeing his family on holidays and Christmas.

Despite these difficulties, Lawrence showed aptitude for drawing early on in his life and, following his National



Service where he was forced to serve an additional six months on top of the normal two years. He moved back in with his parents. His father had already decided that the somewhat wayward Donald should follow in his footsteps and enter the financial world, leaving Don horrified. Still interested in art, his mother, albeit surprisingly, advised him to pursue his talents and dreams in that area. Lawrence studied art at the London Borough Polytechnic Institute, studying anatomy, architecture and composition, but failed his exam following no opportunity to show his talents within those fields. Lawrence instead had to take lithography and woodcarving, both of which he hated and hence, one of the greatest strip artists Britain ever produced left his further education without a diploma.

In his third year of art school Don met Julia, a woman whom he married in 1954. The couple had five children before divorcing in 1973. Lawrence later married Elisabeth Ross in 1979.

Following a later chance meeting with fellow graduate Doug Marler, Lawrence decided that comic strip art was the career to pursue after Marler showed Lawrence the samples he was producing and, more importantly, getting paid for.

Miller Time

Lawrence, like every artist who has walked the earth, myself included, hawked his work around all the art establishments in his local area and sent dozens of samples to agencies and editors in all areas of publishing. He eventually showed samples of his lettering (the last thing Lawrence wanted to work on) to Mick Anglo, who ran a studio involved in producing comic strips for magazines. Anglo was producing such strips as 'Ace Malloy', 'Captain Valiant' for Arnold Publishing and 'Marvelman' for Miller. Lawrence quickly became one of the top talents working for Anglo's studio and worked almost exclusively for Anglo for four years.

Working from home, Don drew the adventures of Marvelman and various westerns such as 'Davy Crockett', 'Daniel Boone' and 'Gunhawks'. Although Lawrence was quite well paid - beginning on £1 per page for 10 pages a week (which soon increased to £2 per page), disagreements began. Anglo had complained that the last story Don had drawn was not up to standard. Lawrence retorted that his work was superior to any of the artwork produced by the studio and, although Anglo agreed, the spat ended their relationship as Lawrence resigned.

Go West

Lawrence moved to Odhams Press where he produced artwork for 'Billy the Kid' before moving onto 'Wells Fargo' and other western strips. I know Lawrence was never confident about his rendering of westerns and yet for me they rank amongst his best work.

Whilst drawing these westerns, Lawrence filled in occasionally for Italian artist Ruggero Giovanni on 'Oiac the Gladiator' in *Tiger*. Enjoying this kind of strip more than any other, Lawrence was offered 'Karl the Viking' (*Lion*) and the Saxon saga of 'Maroc the Mighty' both strips being written at that time by the acclaimed science fantasy writer Michael Moorcock.

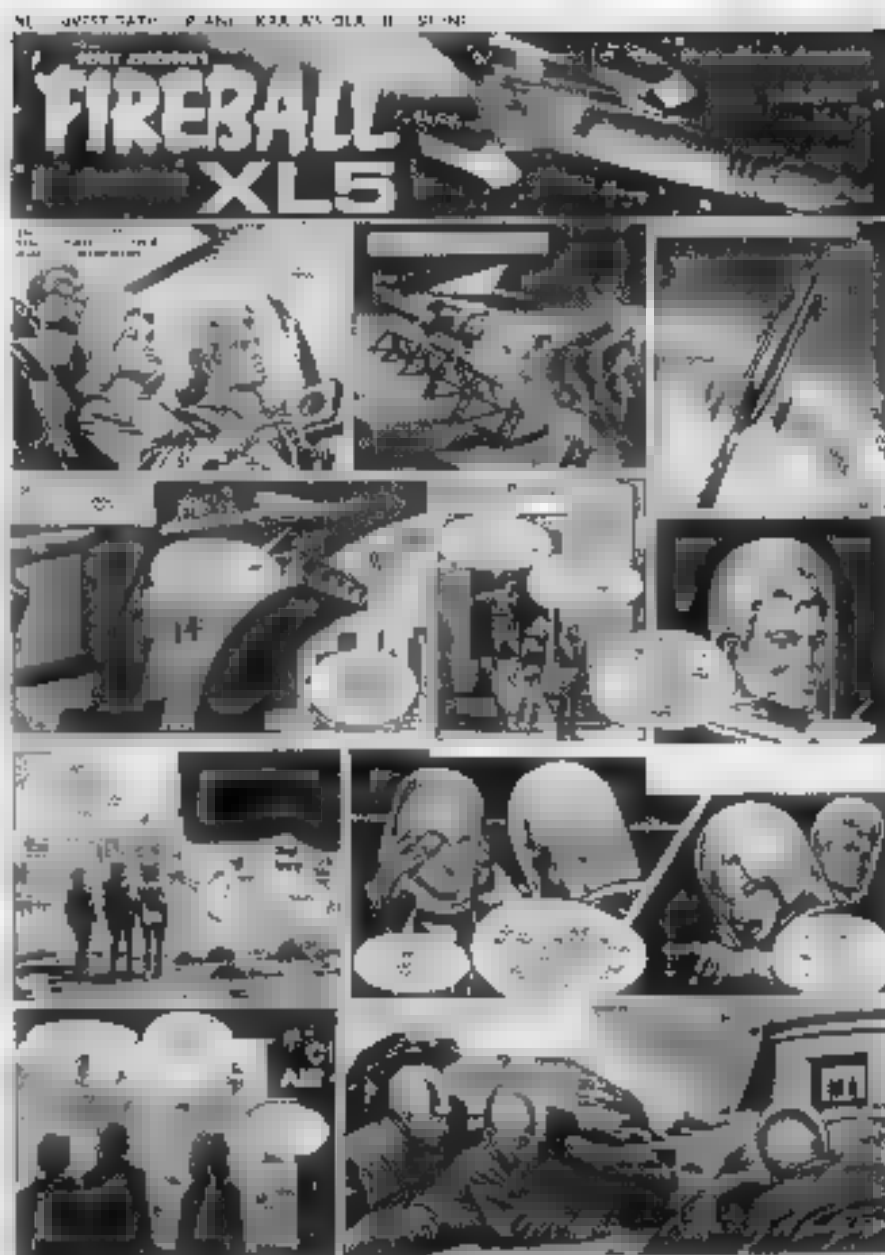
Lawrence's skill in depicting all things ancient - body armour, swords, horses (though, apparently, Lawrence was never sure about drawing horses) - tough macho men and beautiful folds in cloth - were a ready beginning to show in his artwork. Yet all these stories were produced in black and white and it wasn't until his colour rendering of 'Karl the Viking and the Tideless Sea' (*Lion Annual* 1965) that Lawrence finally found his best medium.

Lawrence's peers were some of the finest in comics: Frank Belamy, Mike Noble and Ron Emberton and although the standard was certainly as high as it might be, Lawrence held his own and worked on undaunted by others in his field.

The Empire Strikes

More colour work appeared in *Bible Story Magazine* and then he and writer Mike Butterworth unleashed

(Left) This scene from *The Trigan Empire* appeared as the frontispiece in Hamlyn's 1978 compilation of the series. Note Don's eye for detail on the folds and clothing, boots and rock formation.



(Above) 'Fireball XL5' from TV21. (Below) A scene from 'The Pirates of Pandarve' (1980), Lawrence's great work with Martin Lodewijk.





(Above)
A scene from 'Truce with Hericon' (*Look & Learn* 1967)



(Above) These scenes from 'Revolution in Zabriz' (*Look & Learn* 1967) show Lawrence's expertise in establishing shot, perspective, drama, costume and the use of close up. Steven Spielberg eat your heart out!

The Rise and Fall of the Trigan Empire' in the first issue of *The Ranger* (September 1965) Lawrence drew the Trigan Empire strip for the next 11 years, producing two pages a week, whilst continuing to work on other projects such as 'Oh, Wicked Wanda' and 'Little Annie Fanny' for the mens magazine *Mayfair*.

He also provided artwork of a very different style! – for the classic *Boys World* and *Once Upon a Time* educational magazines.

Lawrence's approach to his work was amazing, he would write the time he presumed it would take him to draw each panel next to the panel – one and a half hours, half an hour etc., then simply get on with it. At his peak, he could finish a complete full colour page, from blank page to finished art, in no more than eight hours.

The workload and his approach to it, took its toll on Lawrence's health. Like to the true pro he was Lawrence battled through his illnesses and continued to produce outstanding artwork.

Empire's End

Don's commitment, professionalism and loyalty had never been questioned until his first appearance at a Comic Convention in 1976. Lawrence was appalled to discover that *The Trigan Empire* had been syndicated abroad without his knowledge and certainly without any remuneration. To add insult to injury he was voted best artist in Europe – by fans he didn't know were aware of his work.

A devastated Don Lawrence departed his tenure on *The Trigan Empire* leaving the saga unfinished.

Although Lawrence got work immediately with a new Dutch comic he continued to harbour his sense of betrayal which in turn had a detrimental effect on his ailing health.

With his new venture ahead Lawrence's new publisher insisted that all artists work with inks rather than gouache. This gave Lawrence even more problems, but being the professional he was, he mastered the inks and again produced stunning artwork. Years later Lawrence found himself using his preferred gouache again – and for some reason his publishers never said a word.

A Storming Success

Lawrence found his next big success with *Storm*, based on a concept by Dutch writer Martin Lodewijk and written by, amongst others, Philip Dunn. The final *Storm* series completed by Lawrence's former assistant Liam Sharp appeared in the magazine *Pandora* published by the Don Lawrence Fanclub in 1999-2001.

Legacy

Throughout his career and apart from the many other art projects he drew, Don Lawrence drew 46 stories for *The Trigan Empire* following that he produced 22 volumes featuring *Storm* – each 48 pages plus cover making at least another 1,000 pages.

These are all pages produced in full colour using his pencil, gouache, inks and the white of the paper. Only the work of Beilamy Noble and Emberton matched the quality of

Lawrence's 'Trigan Empire' and 'Storm'. I do not say these words lightly, nor have I forgotten Frank Hampson's work on 'Dan Dare'.

The loss of such an artist is immeasurable. I never met him, but I always felt he was drawing for me, showing me how to design and render the most impossible drawings, the most impossible angles.

Don Lawrence brought everything to a strip, he directed, photographed and lit the stage. He cast the actors, designed the sets, chose the locations. And only a man who could never get the overshortening of his characters' arms right!

Lawrence worked on the strip up to his death from emphysema in 2003, aged 75. In those last years he had forged many friendships in Holland and received dozens of awards for his contributions to the medium.

As if all of his health problems were not enough, a botched cataract operation in 1995 had left Lawrence with a most no sight in his right eye and he soon lost his sight in that eye altogether. Following this, he had to teach himself new techniques in application, as he couldn't perceive depth.

Despite this, his heroes were tall and handsome with thick blond hair, toned bodies were often adorned in togas and red cloaks. The badasses (in Trigan at least) were generally jovial, sporting thin moustaches with skin that would seem to turn green for a week before reverting back to its normal flesh-coloured form.

The women?

The women were just so beautiful.

Don Lawrence was buried on 10 January, 2004 at the graveyard of St Andrews Church in his beloved village of Jevington. Family and friends from all over the world came to say goodbye and although he never received the accolades he deserved in Britain, on the Continent he was hailed as a star. ●

Don Lawrence first drew Karl the Viking in 1960 in a strip called 'Sword Of Eingar' starring Karl and his rival, Skurl. The pair had pledged to recover the 'sword' which had been stolen by the Saxon Earl Gyrth of Eastumbria.

The story proved extremely popular, prompting Karl's return in 'Karl The Viking', a strip that countered many myths about the Vikings with the hero and his army often fighting for good causes. The strip continued until 1965, when Lawrence began work on 'The Trigan Empire' for Ranger magazine. In 1969 Smash reprinted the strip and for some reason re-named it 'Erik the Viking'.



The man who could not die!

As a kid growing up in the 70s, I was captivated by the adventures of the craggy faced, lone traveller who fought against evil and injustice wherever and whenever he found it.

What made the stories so spectacular and unforgettable was the fact that he was almost immortal insofar that he could not be killed except by a blow from a weapon made of solid gold.

So it was that thousands of other comic readers like myself were regaled each week by tales of magic and mystery that took in everything from the Napoleonic Wars to the Incas to fights on Asteroids. Adam Eterno's adventures lasted only six years but like the magazine itself they remain timeless.

But where did he come from and how did he become what he was?

To reveal the history of Adam Eterno we ourselves have to travel back in time! It is 17 October 1970. And we are witnessing the launch of a new comic from IPC/Fleetway: *Thunder*.

Designed from the outset with a merger in mind, it only ran to 22 issues prior to merging with *Lion* on 20 March 1971. Before then it would introduce us to one of the strangest characters ever to appear in British comics - Adam Eternal!

The basic plot and background for this new strip was put together by IPC managing editor Jack LeGrand, *Thunder* editor Geoff Kemp and assistant editor Chris Lowder, who would script many of the *Kate* stories.

Writer Tom Tully was brought in early on in the process to help flesh out their ideas and Artist Tom Kerr was enlisted to give the strip a mature, recognisable style. Later on Colin Page and Juan Grait would take on artistic duties with the bulk of the work being done by Soriano Lopez studio with the scripting duties being shared between Tom Tully, Ted Cowan, Chris Lowder and Donne Ayener.

Adam Eterno remains one of the top fan favourites of the period - being literally a character refuses to die!



Adam's eve

The first strip was set in a dank cellar in 16th Century London – 1580, to be precise. Doctor Erasmus Hemlock and his young assistant Adam are staring incredulously at a bubbling potion they have worked on for many years – the famed Elixir of Life! Reputed to give whosoever quaffed it the Gift of Eternal Youth, the ancient alchemist deemed it not quite ready yet. Later that same night, however, the impatient Adam sneaked back to the alchemist's cellar and greedily gulped down the last drop of a strange greenish liquid.

The elixir would be a reward for his years of slavish devotion. Or so he thought.

Just then the Doctor appeared and when he saw what Adam had done he flew into a blinding rage. He cursed Adam with a second 'gift' – the Gift of Eternal Life – now only a blow from a weapon made of solid gold could restore him to his former self.

Adam simply scoffed at the old man's curse, driving his former master into a rage. The old man fell with a flight of stone steps, knocking over a flaming brazier in the process and setting the building on fire.

Adam at once repented and begged forgiveness, but it was already too late. As he carried his dead master outside he was met by the horrified stares of the villagers who had gathered to see what all the commotion was about.

They fled in terror when they saw Adam's master dead at his feet and realised Adam himself was left untouched by the fire. Adam fled in desperation and tried to make a new life for himself. But wherever he went, people despised him for his youthful looks and strange ways.

In retaliation, Adam, under the guise of a witchfinder, travelled the land and killed any sorcerers who were on the verge of discovering the Elixir of Life. As the years passed, Adam grew suicidal and in an effort to kill himself, joined the armies of the world, fighting in the Napoleonic Wars right up to the Second World War.

But only gold could kill Adam!

Oblivion

One day in 1970, when Adam was 421 years old, he wandered along a busy London road. Lost in his own misery, he did not notice the gold plated limousine of Greek Millionaire Hymis Metataxis which ploughed headlong into him.

Horried Thorg, the chauffeur, got out to check on the hapless hobo he had just knocked down, but to his



Stripography

Weeklies

Thunder (17 October 1970-13 March 1971)
Lion and Thunder (20 March 1971-18 May 1974)
Valiant and Lion (25 May 1974-16 October 1976)

Specials

Lion and Thunder Holiday Specials 1972-1973
Lion Holiday Specials 1974-1975
Valiant Holiday Specials 1975-1979

Annals

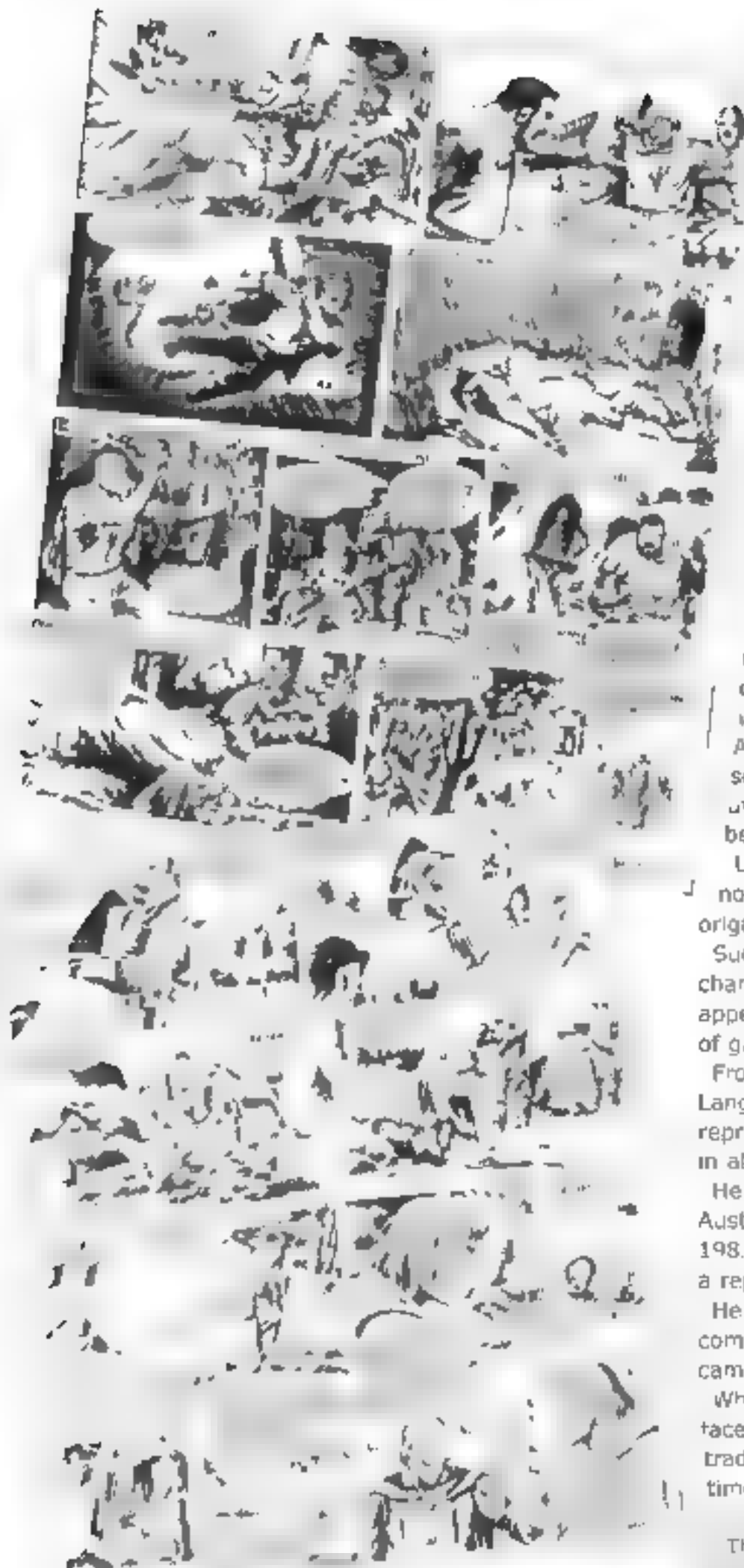
Thunder Annals 1972-1974
Lion Annals 1975-1980
Valiant Annals 1976,1978-1980

Reprints

Janus Stark 1-51, July 1973 - March 1983
Reverie 1-3, 1983 - ad hoc

Pastiches and Cameos

Stormwatch 1 #44
Jack Staff #11 (vol 2) thru #12
Albion 1
2000AD Prog 1519, 10 Jan 2007



An immortal who could move throughout time - a perfect recipe for adventure!

amazement found nothing save a tattered piece of cloth

And he was alone

But where did he go?

Adam Eterno was only gold plated
 in a way that made him seem
 nor alive in the normal sense of the word. Guided by the

Fates, he was now doomed to wander up and down the timelines fighting wrongdoing where and whenever he found himself

At first Adam resented this new form of the curse but in time dedicated his gifts to help others less fortunate than himself and decided to avoid gold rather than actively seek it out to end his life of centuries. Each time, he would find himself materialising in a new place and time brought there to right some evil and only on successful completion of his task would he be mysteriously returned to Limbo, there to dwell in a dreamy state among the stars and moons of a billion years. And of course each story always featured an appearance of that by now dreaded metal, which came in a bewildering variety of guises

Adam link

Lion teamed up with *Valiant* on 24 May 1974 for a nine month tenure during which time *Lion* would be dropped from the masthead (29 March 1975). *Valiant* went solo until it teamed up with *Vulcan* (10 Apr 1976). *Valiant* dropped the *Vulcan* masthead sometime in September, effectively going solo again until it, too, ended on the 16 October 1976 (one day before Adam Eterno's sixth comic birthday!)

Unlike some of the other characters, Adam Eterno did not cross over to *Battle Picture Weekly*. Adam's last original appearance was in *Valiant Holiday Special* in '79. Such was and is the popularity of this amazing character that during and since his heyday, he has appeared in a variety of magazines and under a variety of guises.

From 1973 to 1983 he appeared in the French Language comic *Janus Stark*. Although these were reprints, he did manage to appear on the cover 20 times in all new illustrations (artists unknown).

He also made a guest appearance in *Reverie*, an Australian anthology which ran on an ad hoc basis from 1983 to 1987. Eterno featured in the first three Issues in a reprint of *The Pirate Island*.

He has been pastiched and imitated in many other comics. On 10 January 2007 he appeared as himself in a cameo in 'Stick back in 2000AD comic'.

Where and when will this tragic hero - with his craggy face, tattered clothes, superhuman strength and trademark shoulder cape appear again? By Crom, only time will tell! ●

This has been just an introduction to Adam Eterno. If it has whetted your appetite please visit the AE tribute site at <http://adameternoforever.tripod.com//index.html>

If you have any questions, come along to the forum group at

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/adameternoforever/>

My thanks to the following for their contributions. ~~Steve~~ many others wish to remain anonymous! Steve Laming for kickstarting the whole project. Steve Howard, Master Indexer, Mike Gage, Alan Wright, Stenark, Imbie, The various Yahoo! groups, The forum members of ComicsUK

My Comicy Saturday

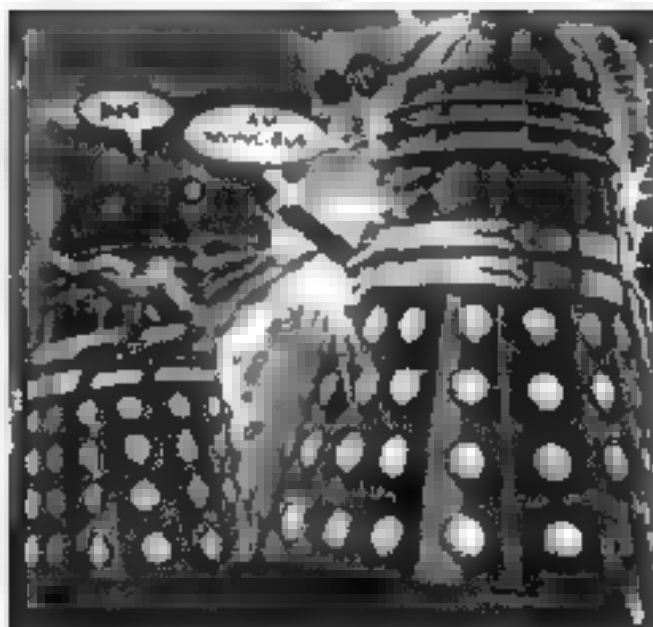
by Tom Eliot

Maybe the past is always like this
 Maybe all we ever remember is an
 amalgamation of all the moments and
 our minds rearrange them into a single
 precise second. A smile here. A scent
 there. A new television, a tangerine and
 the sound of a door closing.
 Try it. Put yourself down and set
 yourself the task of being eleven again
 for a moment. What comes? Christmas,
 streets sticky with tar, a toy, a look
 at a strange boy holding a piece of
 string, a word.

Mind games

In holding the comic in my hand
 the smell is no use to me as that's
 how comics smell after forty years not
 how they smelled then. The smell of
 ink and decay is the present not the
 past. The touch? Comics did not flake
 away in your hand, they slid and
 cracked with crispness and vigour.





Like we did
The school,
the street,
the house,
the people –
even the
football
ground are
a gone
Where do
you live?
Down the
Grid What
street? Pig's
feet? What

number? Cucumbers may as well live there now, it's just as real as the old way and the old house

I'm holding the comic in my hand. Tangible. Touching the past. Sitting in the chair and sipping and sipping

Worlds

There was not just one Comicy Saturday there were two. The black and white streets, the gas light, the croft the cobbles, the moon in a puddle – that's another place. Too far back. We moved house in 1967 from the 'old way' to the 'new way' – that's the Comicy Saturday that comes back now

I guess the time before then was poverty. The brave new world of a modern housing estate with gardens and garages and baths represented a new start. A clinical freshness. A Saturday in short pants riding invisible horses while cracking your own backside for more speed was long ago

The new world was in colour

Different

As befits the change, my attitude toward comics also shifted. Once, they had been disposable, currency, swap-

fodder. Annuals were kept and weekly *Beano* and *Dandy* laughter was transitory. The memory lingered but the comics did not

With the possible exception of *TV21* British comics were not something I collected. *TV21* was different. It felt that you had to keep it. This was a transmission from the future and did not belong in the past. *TV21* made the trip in the old car with the worned cat and the family that left behind the croft. Left behind the broken windows and the rain and moved to... the new estate

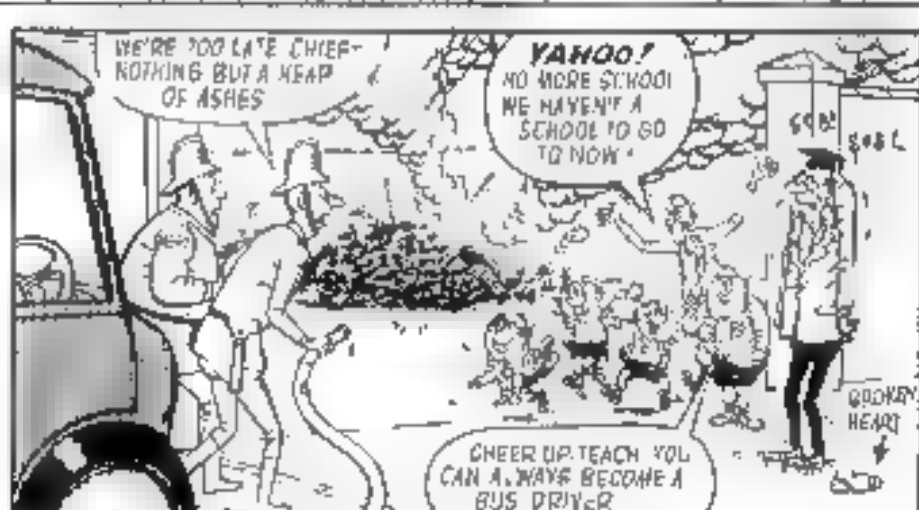
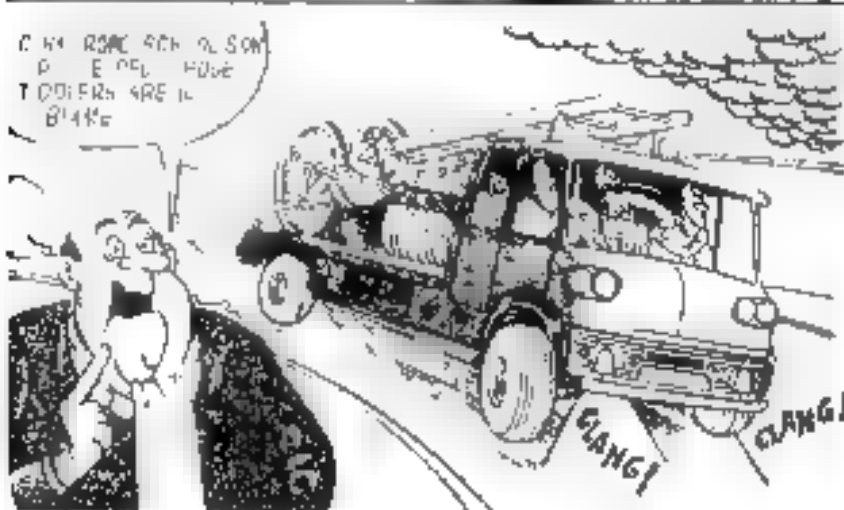
I knew that we had moved up in the world because the comics were now delivered. They arrived early (usually) on a Saturday morning pushed through the letterbox with the papers and catching at the bottom of a net curtain. If they were not pushed a little the way through then the curtain would stick out meaning it could be seen from the top of the stairs. That way the comics made no noise, which is why I had to check every three minutes to see if they were here. There was even a week when they came through but fell at 90 degrees to the floor hid behind the curtain. They had probably been there for two hours before I realised, despite looking dozens of times. One week they did not come at all

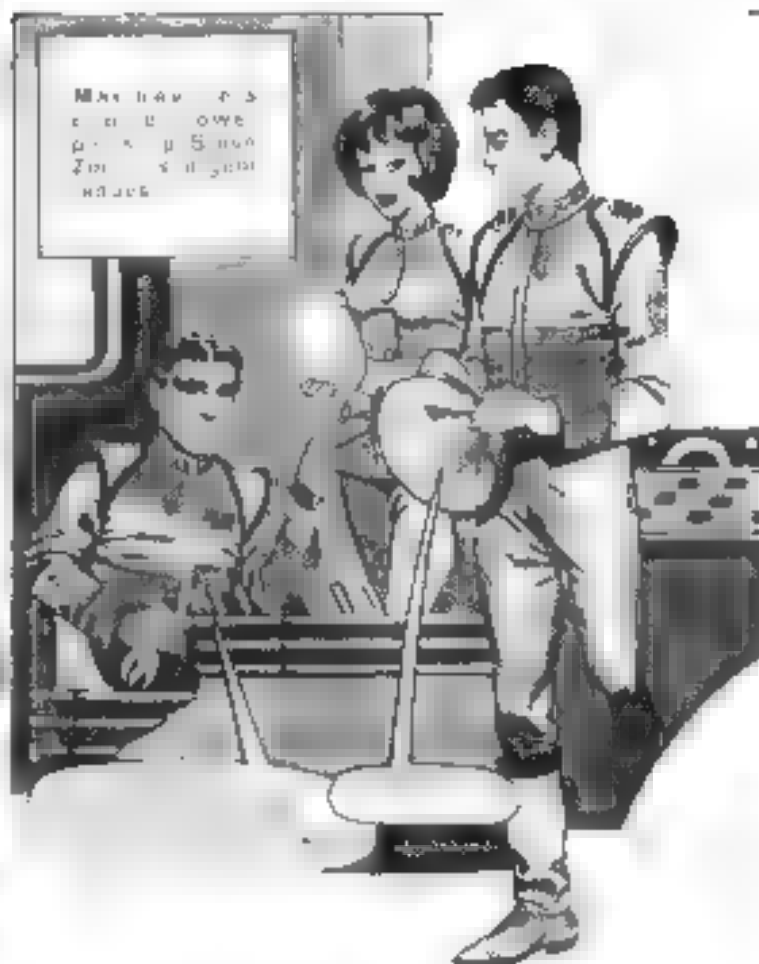
Out there in the cold a boy would be carrying my Saturday morning heaven to this new house. This house that had heating and no frost on the windows. The early Saturdays were tinged with regret as Freddy the cat, who had made the journey with us, disappeared – possibly going back to the now demolished old house. I used to spend the day walking streets looking for him

Power

These Saturdays were made up of a great mix of comics but certainly the mainstay of the first year were the Power Comics. I had moved on from collecting comics that simply made me laugh to this, a thrilling way of retracing Marvel's past

To this day I prefer my heroes in black and white and I





Stingray on TV and in TV21 - who could ask for more!

strove the episodic spitting of stories that *Fantastic* and *Terrific* taught me. I would carry my new comics up the stairs and get out all my old collection to be joined by the latest instalments. Here was the difference. These comics were kept in the same way that my American comics were kept. Stored, filed, treasured - sometimes when mam went to Bingo I'd spread them across the whole of the living room floor on the orange and green and yellow carpet where I finally mastered forward rolls.

Often while waiting for the errant paperboy I would re-read the chapters from last week with the inner voice that was always there, previewing the drama to come. The reprints of the 'X-Men', 'Thor', 'Dr Strange', 'Iron Man', 'Avengers' and Prince Namor (many of which I already had as originals) were added to by in-house strips and the masterful mimicry of Stan the Man that came across in News from the Floor of '64.

Old comics had been about swapping and exchange. These were to be collected and revered.

Smashing footie

While Power Comics formed my earliest memories they eventually gave way to *Scorchers* (fitted in perfectly with my dawning love of football) and the revamped *Smash* that had somehow turned into the greatest adventure comic ever.

The literally dark art of Solano Lopez and his disciples brought depth and gravity to 'The Master of the Marsh', 'Janus Stark', 'Christor Doom' and 'The Thirteen Tasks of Simon Test'. These were fine strips indeed for a boy who was becoming increasingly insular. The old way of life had taken me to the shops and the new way brought the shops to me. Maybe it is in such moments that the sulky teenager is born who lays in bed until 12 and forgets how to speak.

Gradually there was a shift in my tastes as the man

fodder became *Scorchers*, *Score 'n' Roar*, *Shoot* and *Striker*. I was leaving behind the heroes of the darkness and starting to develop new hobbies and interests based around football.

Christmas became a black and red striped Umbro City away kit (cos Big Mal wanted us to look like A.C. Milan) rather than the usual annuals and then in a moment it was all over.

I had said goodbye to British comics forever.

Growing pains

That's how it happens, I think. The Saturday that was so important and so regimented gives way to something else because everything does. Our Mothers never threw our comics out. We all know that! That's the lie that we tell ourselves to excuse leaving Peter Pan behind and growing up. In moments of self-aggrandized indulgence we ourselves put away our toys and took the first steps in growing up.

The cars, the trains, the cowboy guns, the Daleks, the Man from U.N.C.L.E. badge, the Johnny Astro, the Give-a-show projector - they are all out there with the comics that we discarded (and the ones that discarded us).

They're out there with Freddy in a demolished permafrost of stickybuds and lollystick heaven.

We leave childhood behind. We leave the Comic Saturdays in the same trunk as our desires and fears and we move to somewhere new.

Some of us are lucky. Some of us managed to find our way home. You did because you are holding this ticket. You made it back to the old way. I congratulate you and if you did not quite make it and you're only visiting, go and make some cheese on toast, pick up an old comic and return to your own Comic Saturday.

There's a kid who wants a word with you. ●

Are these the UK's Rarest Comic Annuals?

By Bob Norton

This article is not about the ten most expensive annuals published in the UK or the top ten most popular – it's about the ten rarest. The thrill of the chase and dedication are the major factors collectors need here – not just bags of cash. Your average City gent could pick up the phone and buy most if not all of the ten most expensive out of his performance bonus as an investment and not leave the office or miss the cash. Not so the ten rarest.

Well known great art and interesting storylines – these are the factors that fuel demand and turn rarity into the high cash values now being reached at auction for titles like the first Broons Annual. My aim in this article is not only to discuss the better known rarities but also to shine some light on the lesser known ones on the UK annuals scene. Sure, the ten rarest annuals and the ten most expensive do share the odd title in common, but rarity on its own is not particularly a merit!

A few definitions are needed here if this article is to be objective – what does rare and scarce mean in terms of annuals? (Come on, that – what is an annual anyway? My definition is wider than you might think)

Comic Annuals

Let's start with what I feel constitutes a 'Comic Annual'. Firstly, it needn't say 'annual' in the title or 'comic' either for that matter! In my definition, it must be published once a year, as a separate item and be related to a panel art comic or newspaper strip past or present, even if just published for the one year. This rules out both pull-out supplements to comics and annuals related to the purely text comics of the 1930s and before. The 'comic annual' doesn't even need a current weekly comic to support it and can contain reprint panel art material just so as long as it was reprinted from comics or strips and was published as a once-a-year separate annual.

The best known and most common type of annual is that distributed in time for Christmas and usually on sale from about the end of August. These tend to be hardbacks though not exclusively so, as many card-covered annuals were produced. Indeed, some of these are in my list as their covers are so fragile they tend to get badly damaged and hence the annual thrown away.

My definition, however, also includes another type of annual, the paperback Summer, Spring and Autumn Specials as they are only published once a year as stand alone items.

Rarity

There are two main causes of rarity. Firstly, rarity due to very few annuals being published in the first place (absolute rarity) and, secondly, due to wear and tear and wartime paper shortages/recycling, very few copies currently survive (relative rarity). The practical index of rarity from either cause being the frequency of occurrence in the marketplace on eBay and other recent auctions such as the Compa Comic Auctions. I believe one of the reasons UK annuals (and UK comics for that matter) are not as expensive as their US counterparts is that insufficient information is known about the numbers of individual titles which currently survive. Collectors don't know how rare a title they are bidding for really is, and so stop short of putting in realistic high bids. I have attempted here, for the first time in the UK (as far as I know), to introduce such a measure. This is adapted from one already used in the US for comics and I have called it Rarity Index Band or RIB for short.

Rarity Index Band attempts to estimate the number of each title that currently survives. This obviously cannot give an absolute number but I feel a reasonable first stab can be made. Here though, another factor rears its head to muddy the waters – condition. If the tool is to be useful then it has to be simple to use and I'm therefore going for a simple rule of thumb – the annual must be in 'British Grade A' – this approximates to US comic grade Very Fine and UK grade of VG+++. It must have its original dustwrapper (if published with one). It must have its spine and be complete (price clipping is acceptable), be clean and have no major defects. Fine copies (where they exist) will obviously be a much smaller subset of the numbers I give below (I'd estimate around only 5% will be in Fine).

I have used the following three indices of rarity for UK Annuals:-

Rarity Index Band I [Very Rare] – 1 to 15 copies exist in VG+++ or better

This happens very infrequently and is mainly due to a change of mind by the publishers about releasing the annual.

Rarity Index Band II [Rare] – 16 to 39 copies exist in VG+++ or better

Wartime paper rationing and paper drives fuelled relative rarity of annuals printed in 1941 and 1942.

Rarity Index Band III [Scarce] – 40 to 79 copies exist in VG+++ or better

Better survival rate than category II but still scarce.

Rarity Index Band IV [Uncommon] – 80 to 149 copies exist in VG+++ or better. Supposedly rare but most of the early to mid 1940s *Beano Books* (except 1942 which is Index III) would fall into this category in VG+++ or better, judging by the number that keep coming up at auction.

The List

In my opinion the ten rarest annuals, counting down from number ten to number 1 in order of increasing rarity, are as follows:

10 The New Adventures of Rupert 1936

The national institution that is the yearly Christmas *Rupert Annual* started in 1936 when the *Daily Express* published *The New Adventures of Rupert*, containing purely Rupert material – mostly reprints from the daily newspaper strip but some original strips too.

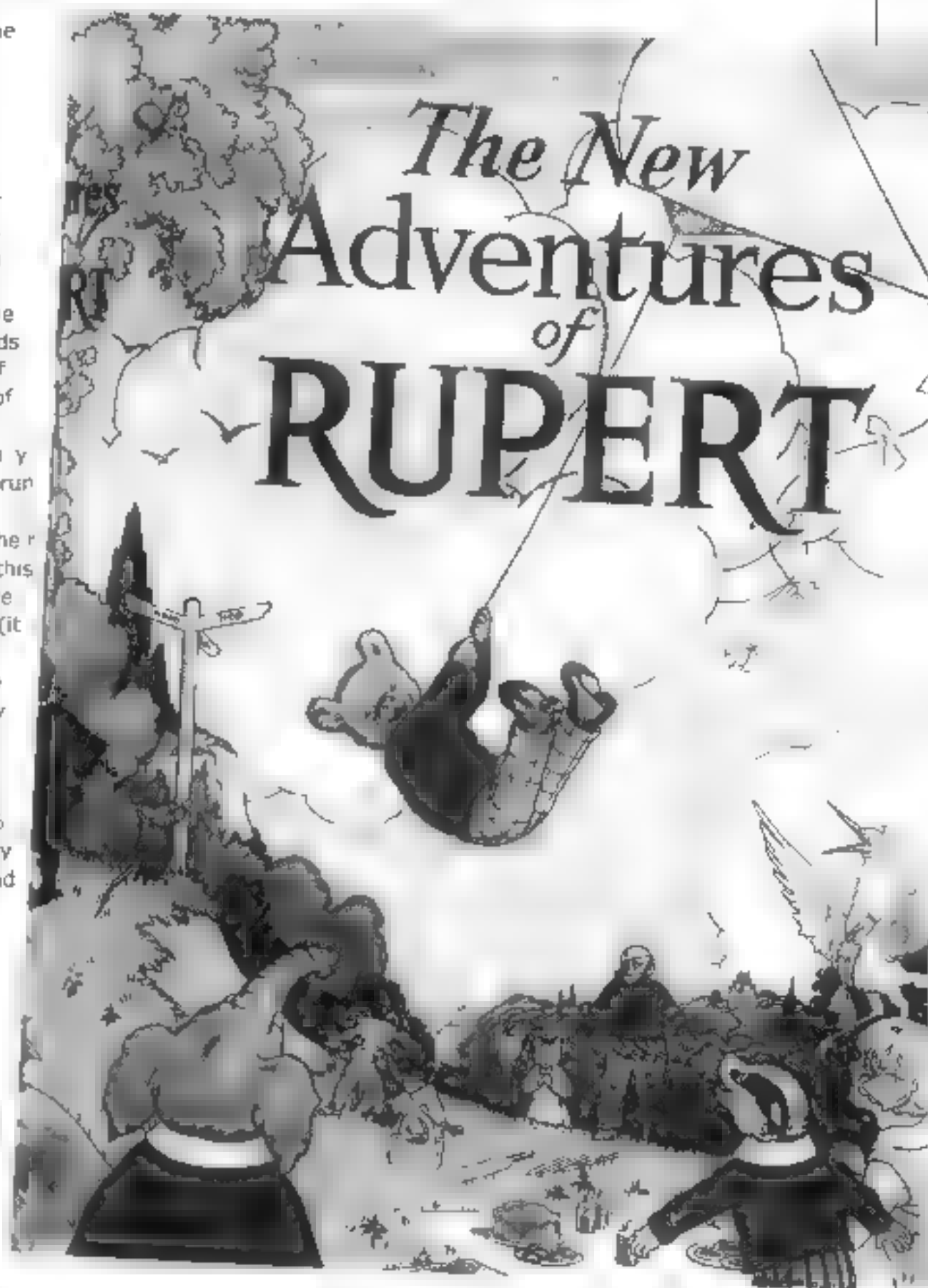
Crucially, the 1936 Annual had a dustwrapper featuring Rupert swinging from a kite, reflecting the theme of the first story (the boards had no illustration, unlike those of future years). The fragile nature of the wrapper, makes finding this annual in its original condition really difficult. My estimate of the print run of the 1936 annual is around 400,000 but most will have lost the wrapper by now. As the rarity of this annual with a wrapper is pretty well known and the content desirable (it being full of art by Alfred Bestall, prices reflect that, although as no absolute rarity was built in, it only ranks as number 10 on this list.

A Mint copy would need the original box and the plain tissue-paper over-wrapper that the 1936 annual came in but there are only a handful of these in existence and no wonder.

Rarity Index Band III - 40 to 79 copies with the wrapper

Best Estimate of Actual Number Existing around 70 copies with the wrapper

Recent Auction Price £1,540 in Nov 2005 Compai Auction



My Top Tip from the list

Is there a 'sleeper' in the above list that is currently way undervalued? Well yes! I think it's number 2 on the list – the 1950 Radio Fun with the Tommy Handley cover. If you think about it, why should the 1973 Rupert be £23,000 when all they did was change the colour of his face and shoes? You might say Rupert collectors are completists and that's why but there's the difference with the US market at the moment. A rarity like this with its wartime links and great internal art would be very valuable there. Still, UK comics and annuals are very much on the up with the likes of the recent Comics Britannia series on BBC4, so who knows; it may be fetching £1000 plus in a couple of years! Of course the above list is only one guy's opinion, so if you know better and hopefully have the evidence to back up your choice then give us your feedback by the letters page or via the Crikey! website (www.crikeyuk.co.uk).

Top Ten

The most expensive UK annuals are mainly the early DCT annuals. Compai do get high prices for these books and their data is my main source, although it's hard to be definitive on which are the ten most

expensive. Here's my list as of Xmas 2007 of 10 different most valuable UK annuals. They are in order of increasing auction price achieved over the last 5 years where they exist and all prices include 10% buyer's premium.

- i) Magic Annual 1942 – none found in last 5 yrs but sure to be top 10!
- ii) Magic Annual 1943 – £951 taped spine Compai – another top tenner
- iii) New Adventures of Rupert 1936 in wrapper – £1,540 Nov 2005 Compai.
- iv) Beano Annual 1944 – £2,148 Compai.
- v) Broons 1942 – £3691 Sep 03 Compai
- vi) Beano Annual 1940 – £3,872 Jun 2004 Compai.
- vii) Oor Wullie 1940 – hardbacked version £4015 in Sept 05 Compai. A fine example found in an Edinburgh loft, recently exchanged hands for £4,500!
- viii) Broons Annual 1939 – £5390 in Sept 03 Compai
- ix) Dandy Annual 1939 – £6232 in the Sep 2006 Compai.
- x) Rupert Annual 1973 (Brown Face) – £23,000 Dukes Auction Aug 2007

9 Topper Picture Book 1956

This is a strange annual. Produced as a large format (16"x12") card covered book, the title only appeared once as, unlike 1963 *Dandy-Beano Summer Special* (discussed below), the concept was not taken further in following years.

How could a completist collector of DC Thomson (DCT) annuals leave this out of his collection? With the 1954 *Desperate Dan Annual* (RIB IV) and the first *Dennis the Menace Book* 1956 (RIB IV), I think this is among the top three most attractive DCT Annuals of the 1950s and due its large size and card nature one of the scarcest!

Rarity Index Band III - 40 to 79 copies in VG++ or better

Best Estimate of Actual Number Existing 60 copies or so

Recent Auction Price: None found in last five years but around £100 for a VG++ copy would be a reasonable price (I paid £70 three years ago in a private sale)



8 Dandy-Beano Summer Special 1963

This falls within my definition of annual because it came out annually and is comic related - but for the Summer not Xmas.

This 32-page paper-covered bumper number included the work of leading artists at DCT including Dudley Watkins and is the only occasion the two famous comic titles have been combined.

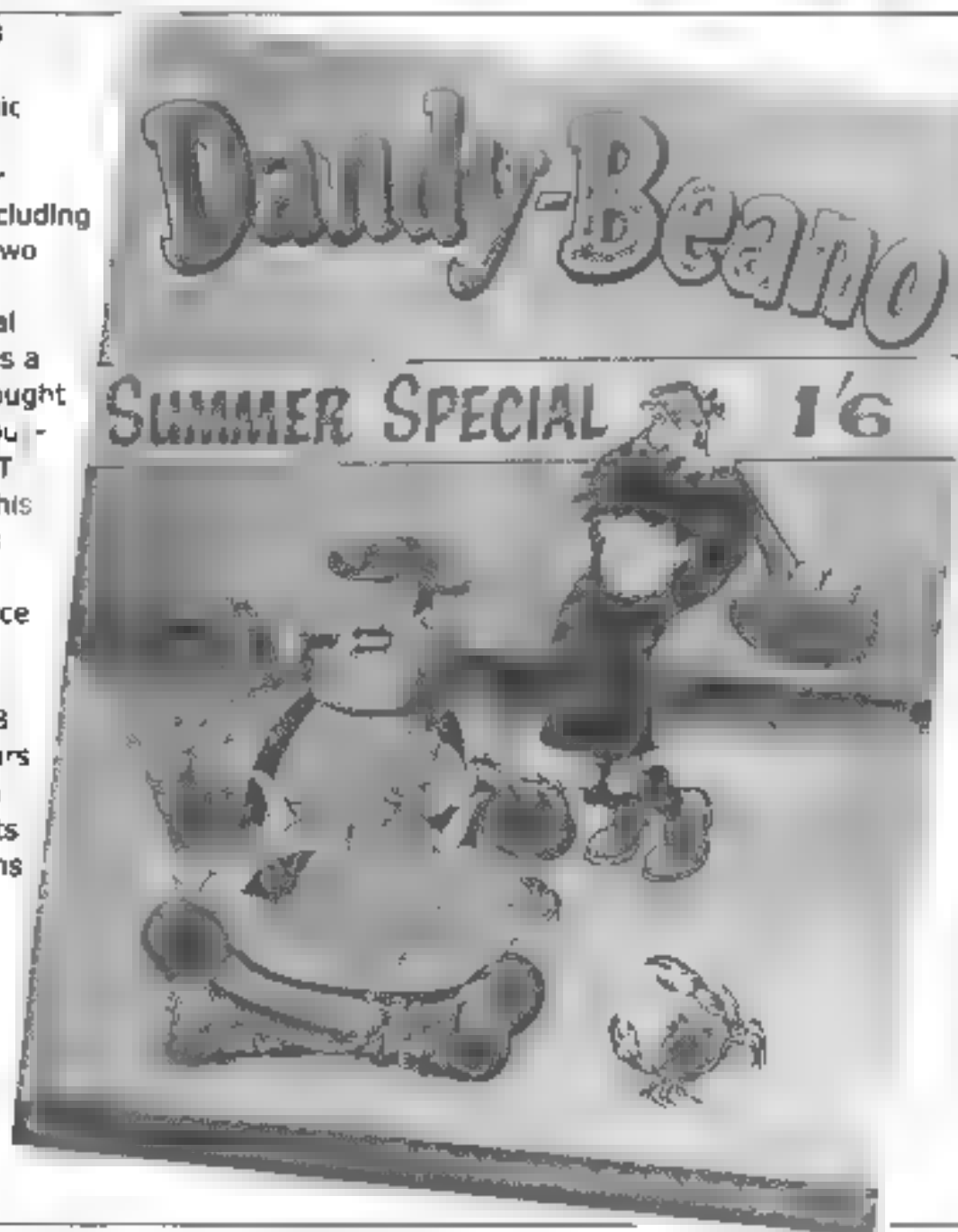
The *Dandy-Beano Summer Special* was a real innovation - the first summer special issued as a separate item ever published! It had been thought of before, as early as June 1936, when as a pull-out supplement to the *Rover Story Paper*, DCT published the *Rover Summer Fun Book*, but this was not a separate specific publication and as such falls outside my definition.

This particular Summer Special is really scarce in any condition, and in VG++ is RIB II. Even the 1964 *Beano and Dandy Summer Specials* (after the titles were separated again) are RIB III and rarely come onto the market. It appears that being the experiment it was, there was a low print run and that factor, combined with its larger-than-comic size and paper covers means a low survival rate!

Rarity Index Band III - 40 to 79 copies in VG++ or better.

Best Estimate Actual Number Existing 50 copies or so.

Recent Auction Price: Two on eBay in the last 12 months fetched around £350 each!



7 Magic Fun Book 1941 (#1) & 1942 (#2)

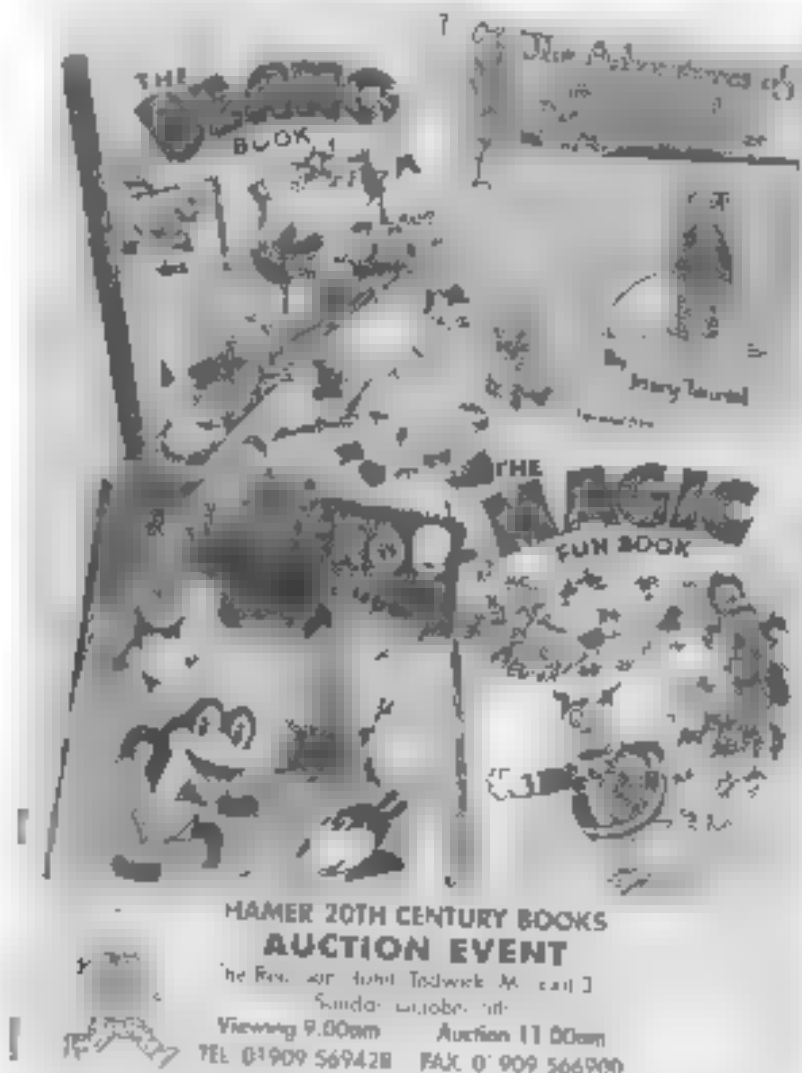
Encouraged by the success of the *Beano* and *Dandy*, DC Thomson issued the *Magic Comic* on 22 July 1939. Aimed at a slightly younger age group, the comic was similar to its companions but did not do as well, the last issue being number 80 - a rare failure for the successful Scottish firm!

When the *Magic Comic* was discontinued, the *Magic Fun Books* (as the annuals were called) also ceased publication, the characters amalgamated into those of *The Beano Book* and from 1943 *The Magic Beano Book* appeared. Only two *Magic Fun Books* were ever produced, those for 1941 and 1942. Wartime paper rationing certainly reduced the numbers of these two annuals and this, together with wartime recycling, has really increased their rarity.

Rarity Index Band II* - 16 to 39 copies in VG++ or better.

Best Estimate of Actual Number Existing: roughly 35 copies of each annual. My guess would be the 1942 is slightly rarer as the comic was nearer to being wound up so fewer may have been printed.

Recent Auction Price: Compa Autumn 2007
Homepage quote: 'We have only seen a handful of *Magic Fun Books* come up for auction so they are genuinely rare. Consequently it was no surprise to see this #2 go for £951, even though it had its spine invisibly taped along the hinges.' No record of the 1941 annual being auctioned could be found over the past 5 years.



6 Bunty Summer Special 1963/4/5 (#1, 2 and 3)

Bunty was an all-picture comic for young girls, first published in January 1958 with an annual *The Bunty Book for Girls* issued in 1960. *The Bunty Summer Special* was spawned at the same editorial meeting where DCT decided to publish the 1963 *Dandy-Beano Summer Special*, *Bunty* being the most popular girls' comic in the DCT stable.

The early *Bunty Summer Specials* have become increasingly popular over the last ten years and are now very difficult to find, especially #1 (1963). The 1964 and 1965 are probably RIB III but 1963 may be RIB II. I only know of one copy but surely these were printed in reasonable numbers, so there must be more out there! 1969 is still quoted as the earliest *Bunty Summer Specials* in all the reference books.

Rarity Index Band II* - 16 to 39 copies exist in VG++ or better.



Best Estimate of Actual Number Existing: 30 copies of each but they haven't come out of collections onto the open market yet!

Recent Auction Price: the 1963 Summer Special fetched £136 on eBay Oct 2006. The '64 and '65 ones fetched £40 in a private sale earlier this year but these prices are way under!



End of Part One ●

The concluding part of Bob Norton's lucid and fascinating guide to the largely undiscovered and potentially confusing world of annuals will appear in our next issue. If you have any comments, additional information or just want to share your collecting anecdotes about annuals get in touch with us at the Crikey! shed.

Contact details are on Um Letters Page.

**WELCOME
TO THE WORLD
OF HEROES!**

2000AD Productions Present
TORNADO

Two years ago I, Tharg, brought you 2000 A.D. - your planet's first comic of the future. Since then my alien mind has come to realise that it is not only heroes from the world of sci-fi that you Earthlings long to read about.

So, over the months, I have been grooming and training an Editor. His mind capacity is 50 times that of a normal human; his physical strength is limitless. He has all the amazing powers of mind and body that he needs to edit a comic of MANY worlds.

Earthlings, I present 'BIG E' and his comic - **TORNADO!**

THARG



WELCOME

Bring you a comic about heroes. Heroes past, present and future. Heroes from war and peace, from sci-fi and fantasy from everywhere there is a foe to be fought or villain vanquished.

By the great powers given me by Tharg I will take you past the barriers of imagination to build a go where no comic has gone before.

THE ENERGY MATRIX OF MY POWERS MAY HAVE INFECTED THE PAGES OF CERTAIN ISSUES, SO DO NOT BE ALARMED IF YOU START TO FLOAT UP FROM YOUR SEAT WHILE SCANNING THIS FIRST ISSUE - YOU WILL RETURN TO NORMAL WHEN YOUR SCAN IS FINISHED.

**ENJOY YOUR
TURBO-FLYER -
SAFELY!**



The Turbo-Flyer is a high-speed, low-cost vehicle designed for the fast-paced action of the future. It is the most advanced flying machine ever created. By using the Turbo-Flyer, you can travel at speeds of up to 1000 miles per hour. But you must be careful where you use your Turbo-Flyer. Do not fly over crowded areas or near buildings. The Turbo-Flyer has a clear path with no obstacles. So be careful where you use your Turbo-Flyer. It is only a toy and must be used safely. The Turbo-Flyer has a clear path with no obstacles. So be careful where you use your Turbo-Flyer.



JOIN YOUR HEROES IN
TORNADO



Years before Dave Gibbons found success with *Watchmen*, he had a whole other career in saving the universe and being a male model. Rumours that the chap at the top is Alan Moore are unfounded!



LOOKING TO SELL A COLLECTION OF BRITISH COMIC BOOKS?

We commission the sale of pre-1980 British comics, annuals, books & artwork and achieve consistently high prices. We also buy items and collections

Visit our website (www.phil-comics.com) to go directly to our live eBay auctions (phil-comics), browse through a selection of British comic material for sale, at set prices, and search our auction results archive. We seek

Beano, Beezer, Broons, Dandy, Eagle, Film Fun, Hotspur, Lion, Oor Wullie, Rupert Bear, Radio Fun, Superman, Topper, Victor and more!

For more details please visit the website, below, or write, telephone or email for a fast, efficient and courteous response

**phil-comics auctions, PO Box 3433, Brighton, BN50 9JA, UK
01273 673462 - phil@phil-comics.com - www.phil-comics.com**

THE BEANO & DANDY COLLECTORS' CLUB

Founded in August 2006, The Beano & Dandy Collectors' Club fills an important gap in the British comic collecting world. The club was set up to cater for collectors and enthusiasts of The Beano and The Dandy comics and annuals, focussing primarily on the years 1937 to 1975. Currently over 100 subscribers enjoy the full colour newsletters containing interesting articles about the comics, annuals, characters, artists and editors, the publishers DC Thomson and more, written by ourselves and guest writers such as Ray Moore. A Letters to the Editor section, items for sale and competitions can also be found. The subscription fee is just £9.95 for UK residents, who receive a member ship card, Collectors' Club coaster and the next three newsletters.

**The Beano & Dandy Collectors' Club
PO Box 3433, Brighton, BN50 9JA, UK
01273 673462 - phil@phil-comics.com - www.phil-comics.com**



Spiders! Reign of Hell! Black Samurai! Blue Sunshine! The Case Against Satan! The Witching of Dracula!

are you a paperback fanatic?



"Just been reading issue four of PF and it is brilliant!"
Brian 'Crikey' Clarke

Then The Paperback Fanatic is the magazine for you!

Dedicated to the wild and trashy pulps paperbacks of the 1960s/70s, each issue of The Fanatic is loaded with features and articles on horror, fantasy, SF and sleaze - illustrated with at least one hundred crystal clear reproductions of wild and weird cover art in each issue.

Issue five includes a huge overview on the brood-drenched and sex saturated paperback 'Nasties' of the 1970s, a hack and slash through the Rivals of Conan, and an interview with legendary US sleaze author Bob Trautman. And of course, much more! 40 A4 pages.

Issue four crammed in a word exclusive interview with Bob Lory, author of the cult Dracula series, a massive checklist of the work of noted fantasy artist Bruce Pennington and the inside story on the war pulps of Sven Hassel and Leo Kessler. Plus much more! 36 A4 pages.

Issue three has the ultimate study of Kung Fu in the pulps, an overview of Sphere's horror line, Dennis Wheatley's Library of the Occult and a look at sexploitation author Paul Tabori. 32 A4 pages.

Special offer to Crikey readers: all three issues for £10 post-free. Individual issues £4 each including P&P. Payment by paypal to justincultprint.free-on-line.co.uk

opper! Squirm! The Swinger! The Torture Machine! The Vigilante!

The Freak Show! Angels From Hell! The Sucking Pit! Bloodstone!

The Drug Traffic! Voodoo! The Whores of War! Skinhead! Confessions of a Window Cleaner! The Rats!

FIREBALL XL5

Steve Zodiac, JFK and the Kaplan Space War

By Tom Sweetman



(TV21 May 1965) The Kaplan, President of Astra, having been guaranteed his safety, is gunned down whilst on a mission of peace.

To the left and right curious crowds look on. Many have waited for hours to secure their place. Eyes flickering in the sunlight. Finally, inevitably from around a tight corner the anticipated motorcade pulls into the people-lined avenue. Slow moving, open topped vehicles, impressive and vast, are flanked by outriders as they flow through a vibrant river of tickertape and smiles. Heat and motion meld as the day takes on dreamlike rhythm. A time of joy. A snapshot moment as history is about to change.

TV crews look on, commentators attempt to paint word pictures of this important historical moment – a moment that is about to become the defining image of political life for the next hundred years

At the centre of the motorcade sits the president – confident, assured. A breeze. A moment. An image of fate frozen in time as the car nears its destiny

The convoy moves onward – and then, the images that will stay fixed in the psyche of a generation. This moment will define the future of nations and remain crystallized in the consciousness of all who were there and those who just imagined that they were. From a windowed nest to the left a shot screams out.

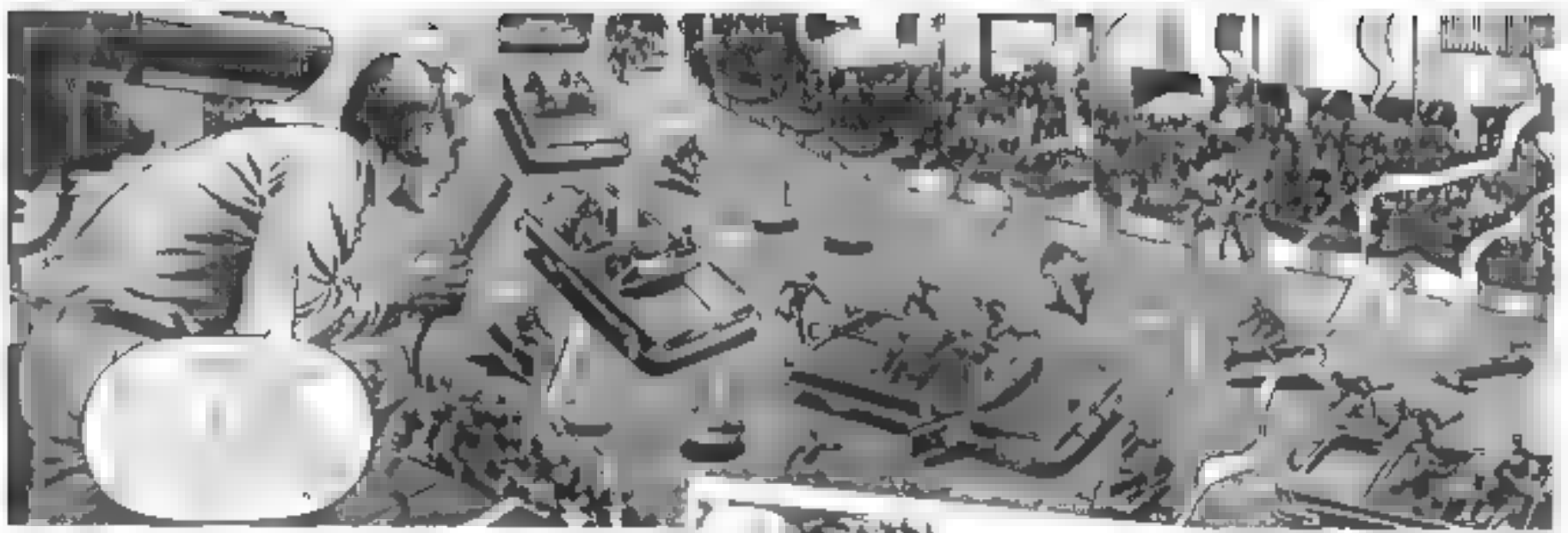
The sniper triumphant.

The magic of fear

The motorcade speeds on.

Accelerated chaos as stillness becomes motion. Speeding vehicles, motor mayhem and the open mouthed disbelief of the Secret Service. They say that everybody remembers where they were on that fateful day.

Everybody knows just what they were doing at the exact moment on the day the Astran Kaplan was



(Above - TV21 May 1965) In an uncanny echo of the 1963 assassination of John F Kennedy, the Kaplan falls to an assassin's bullet. ... then his assassin is double crossed and goes the same way as Kennedy's accused assassin Lee Harvey Oswald (Right)

assassinated in Unity City and Steve Zodiac had thirty-six hours to catch the lone gunman to prevent an all-out space war!

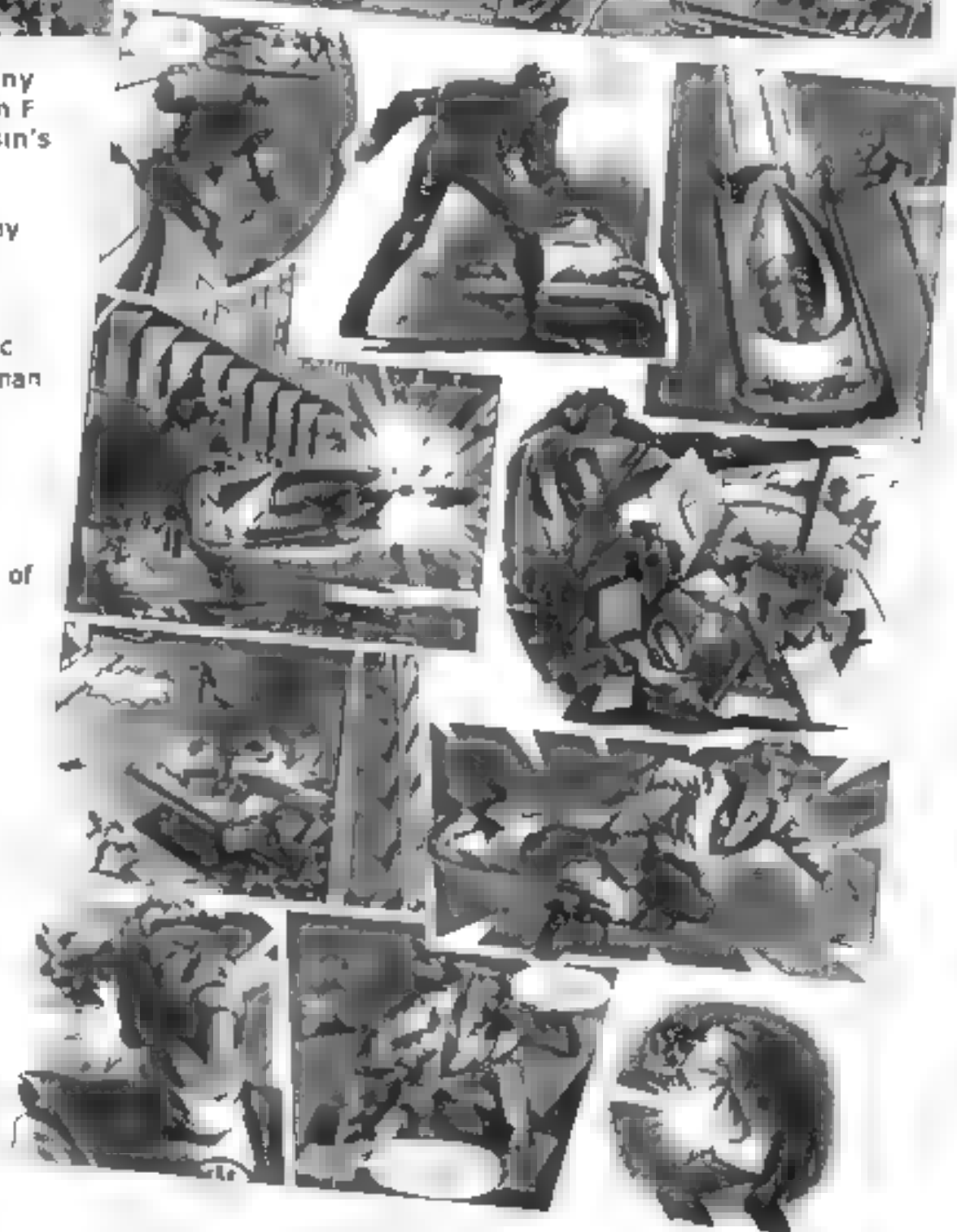
Urban Legend

TV21 was different from any other comic and its faux newspaper cover was never better suited than to the dramatic relaying of this universe-shattering event. The newspaper reportage style was perfect for conveying the importance of the assassination of the Kaplan. Sniper! Screamed the headline as reporter Kylie Walker gave the details of the blasting of the Astran peace convoy. The fourth episode of the Kaplan Space War, 'Assassination', hit the newsstands on 29 May 1965 (TV21 issue 19 - the strip continued in the 'Lady Penelope' episode in the very same issue)

"A shot has been fired at the World President's motorcade. News from Unity City is still confused, but first reports say the Kaplan - leader of the Astran race has been seriously injured. The parade marking peace between Earth and Astra had just entered Bandranaik Plaza when the shot was heard"

The events of November 1963 are said to have been responsible for the postponement of the first ever broadcast of Doctor Who on BBC. It's one of fandom's most enduring urban legends that the Doctor Who story (broadcast on 23 November 1963) was delayed or cancelled due to news of the assassination of the US President.

This is was not the case - the first episode of Doctor Who was delayed, but only by some eighty seconds, due to the previous programme (Grandstand) over-running. The source of the myth seems to have originated from the fact that, due to power cuts blacking out several TV



transmitters, the first episode of 'Doctor Who' ('An Unearthly Child') was repeated a week later, (30th November 1963) immediately before the second episode, 'The Cave of Skulls'.

Anyway - back to Fireball XL5 and the Astran assassin.

The Fireball XL5 story is an amazing piece of comic book history. The Astran saga had already brought a realistic dimension to a series that had previously been characterised by whimsical space hokum. Here was



Steve Zodiac at the centre of pontica intrigue in a strip that had a genuine air of studied menace. The possibility of space war and the dignified build up to this stately moment had been wonderfully paced with the incredible payoff in an audacious recreation of the Kennedy assassination. Coming so soon after the tumultuous events in the Dealy Plaza, this may well have been the first re-creation of the events that happened on that historic day.

Space Art

The Fireball strip was awe-inspiring from its first panel, although artist Mike Noble recalls the Astrans with less nostalgia than most readers, "Fireball XL5? The Astrans... everybody seemed to like those, and I was amazed as I thought they looked pretty banal myself."

Until this moment Fireball XL5 had been a black and white television experience in a pre video world and it's impossible to over-emphasize how staggering it was to see the characters that we loved brought to life in living colour.

The Space Border Battle between Earth and Astra was lovingly crafted by Noble with a script that was intelligent and articulate but above all it was a strip drenched in gorgeous colour with an impressive and formidable space fleet soaring through midnight blue star speckled space.

A silver moon shone in the distance in a panel that is easily as impressive and memorable as the first sighting of a battle cruiser that lovingly opened another Star War many years later. Steve Zodiac was right when he intoned "Gee, aren't they a fantastic sight!" Ships not just flying through space—these vessels actually existed in space.

In addition to the dramatic colour, there was the actual depiction of the Fireball crew. Sure Venus had always been a looker, but now there were no strings to hold her down. Matt looked positively Atlas-like and Steve Zodiac's Aryan features were as far removed from the jaunty marionettes that had never seemed fully realised. Sure, Frank Miller reinvented Batman as a much darker knight but in the mid-80s this was a universe-shattering re-imagining of our two-dimensional heroes. TV21 took our heroes and made them real.

Space War

In a confused border incident that predated the errors that were to start the Mysteron war, Astro-Controller Clarke announced that the fleet was under heavy attack... losses were heavy... reinforcements were needed. Back at Space City Colonel Zodiac managed to interpret the crackling space chatter with two chilling words.

"Space War!" The space menace that Steve and his crew were to face was as far removed from the aliens that had hopped and jiggled through the TV series as it was possible to be.

The Astrans were legion. They were politically complex. They could shoot death rays from their geat nous thumb-like bodies and above all they were easy to draw!

My own sketch books from that time (in reality bits of coloured paper and cannibalized *Lion* paper pads) were filled with Astrans and Da eks blasting each other in an operatic space conflict. Draw a thumb – colour it blue and you have your own Astran!

Astran rank and importance was signified by the circular flying devices that aproned their podgy bodies. Attempts to avert all-out war saw Zodiac being summoned to the office of the Solarian President to meet with the Astran Ambassador. This was a politically sophisticated Zodiac – or at least he was when



compared to his TV character. The TV Steve Zodiac would have unholstered his braster and solved the conflict with a quick blast of righteousness.

This time, however, Jaw Jaw and not War War were the order of the day as Steve took on his new role as peace negotiator. The political machinations behind the attempt to prevent conflict gave the strip a Cold War dimension that established the Space City gladiator as a man with a real desire for intergalactic peace. "I'm interested in anything that will stop a space war Mr President. What do you want me to do?"

Jack's Back

What happened to the crazed lone gunman, you ask. As Steve Zodiac attempts to take him to justice another shot rings out. The man suspect gunned down by a second gunman. You couldn't make it up!

The final fate of the Astrans saw the Kapian (it was a scheme all along) destroying his own city in a Nero-like act that brings his conspiracy down around his bendy blue head. (TV21 issue 26 17 July 1965,

As the on-looker revolutionary Astrans observed though, "It is best. The City can be rebuilt ... but if we had gone to war with the earth ... we would not have been able to rebuild the whole universe."

Peace, man

The quest for peace was a recurrent theme that pervaded Century 21 strips. Misunderstanding and mayhem were uncomfortable bedfellows and the prevention of war and disaster was a mainstay not only of 'Fireball XL5' but also the 'Captain Scarlet', 'Thunderbirds', 'Lady Penelope' and 'Zero X' strips.

The enemies were often characterised by technology and their absence of humanity. Threats from earth were portrayed as extremist terrorists and threats from other worlds were there to be understood. Cohesion rather than conflict solved many of the problems that faced the Earth. In a decade that was to be shaped by Vietnam, the plea for understanding and restraint struck a resonant tone. Here were vast arsenals of destructive force that could once have torn the world apart.

As we face a future every bit as uncertain as the build up to the Terran-Astran war we ask Steve Zodiac, where are you now? ●

(Above & opposite): Mike Noble's beautiful rendering of Steve Zodiac, Fireball XL5 and all things space left the readers drooling for more ...

Um letters!

For future issues of Crikey! let us know what you think about our magazine, British comics, your reactions to features or simply make us laugh. Our address is: Crikey! 4 Hillsborough Drive, Unsworth, Bury BL9 8LE. Our electricity communication conduit in the electronic world is : www.crikeyuk.co.uk

Um Brian,

Really nice first issue, congratulations

One little point, in an answer to a question from *Metal Eater* #7 you say that the Iron Man who appeared in the *Eagle* was not Tony Stark but an original British character. No argument there, but then you go on to say that Marvel Comics had an almost exclusive deal with Odhams. Its interesting to note that Stan Lee and Jack Kirby did indeed make an appearance in *Eagle*. I have no idea how many issues they appeared in but appear they did!

Peter Duncan

Belfast

A point well-made, Peter. And just to prove it, here is an image from the later run of *Eagle* with the Norse God himself showing off his powers. There's something not right with Marvel appearing in *Eagle*, I think it's the culture clash of *Eagle*, the quintessential 'English' comic being host to the brash American style. It's also rather symbolic as it was the American comics that took so many of us away from our native titles. Our co-writer and designer Glenn B Fleming is actually working on an article that sets out to show that Jack Kirby destroyed the British comics industry

Crikey

(Right) Lee & Kirby's Tales of Asgard (*Eagle*, March 1968).



Um Crikey!

I was really excited when I saw the first issue cover in *Comics International*. This type of magazine has been a long time coming, and I wish you every success with it.

One minor gripe - no copies available in Forbidden Planet in London. I hope this will be possible in the future, until then I will definitely subscribe.

In future issues I would love to see a feature or two on the classic British humour titles. I have fond memories of traipsing down to the newsagents every Saturday to pick up the following.

Buster, especially when *Monster Fun* folded into it, with 'Martha's Monster Make-Up', 'Faceache' and 'March Of The Mighty Ones'. A feature on the 'Leopard Of Lime Street' would be very much appreciated.

Whizzer and Chips. Many hours spent hunting down the 'invader' in each section of the comic.

Whoopee. I recall the back pages being amazing - with horrific images of famous landmarks. Can't recall the artist but I think he was the same one who drew 'Faceache'. Was it Leo Baxendale?

Along with *Krazy*, *Jackpot*, *Monster Fun*. It's a shame these died out when the teenager started being 'cool'. I still remember the excitement of the Christmas issues, with the snow covering the logos. Happy days.

Of course there is so much you can cover. The adventure titles like *Battle*.

Tiger, *Action*, and the DC Thompson titles such as *Hotspur*. and a personal favourite: *Crunch!*

A centrespread featuring a classic cover may a nice idea, or a collage of comics from a particular week in the 70s. I have often thought it would be great to see a typical newsagents' comics display from say, August 1978. Not only would there be the regular weekly titles but all the summer specials as well!

Best of luck with the title.

Paul Burns

prjburns@yahoo.co.uk



'Faceache' was by Ken Reid and he is indeed the chap responsible for your childhood fascination with famous landmarks coming to a

sticky end. The feature was called 'World Wide Weirdies'. In the same title Ken also contributed the marvellous 'Tom's Horror World'.

As you will have seen in the editorial, Paul - the Crikey! fame continues to grow. Now that we are with Diamond Distributors we will be on sale throughout the known world! So watch out America, Australia, Canada, Latvia.

The classic cover is a good idea but

before we do stuff like that we would like to build up sales enough to enable us to afford colour.

Um Crikey

Just received the latest issue and it looks great. What a pro job after just two issues. And I like the mixture of nostalgia, fact and fiction, reproduced art and letters.

It's a great mix!

It even inspired me to take out a *Beano* subscription for the children, alongside my *Crikey!* sub, of course.

Best,

Piers

Internet

Our Piers is a man of few words.

Um Crikey!

I'm one of those readers who read all kinds of comics as a kid and then drifted over to the colourful and, yes, superheros, of the US product.

But the American comics are unreadable now and so I've been picking up a couple of old British comics and the wonderful Titan reprints. And I'm having the time of my life. And I don't think it's because I'm going back to comics I read as a child because lots of the ones I'm reading and enjoying weren't the ones I read back then.

So *Crikey!* is just in time for me. It gives me a guide to what to look out for and fills me in on writers and artists I'd never heard of before.

I do agree with the points made about the design in issue one, however and feel that issue two got it about right. Even if the 'Escape from Earth' image was

and writers and, if we know them, give the dates and other facts about the strips we feature. But overall, I think we can meet your requirements.

your Chum of the Month being my one time Starblazer editor. I thought he'd left the comics for the women's mags

Oops my name spelt wrong on the contents page, I thought I was safe with a Lancashire editor

I thought the overall layout was a lot less frenetic this time. Perfectly acceptable thanks.

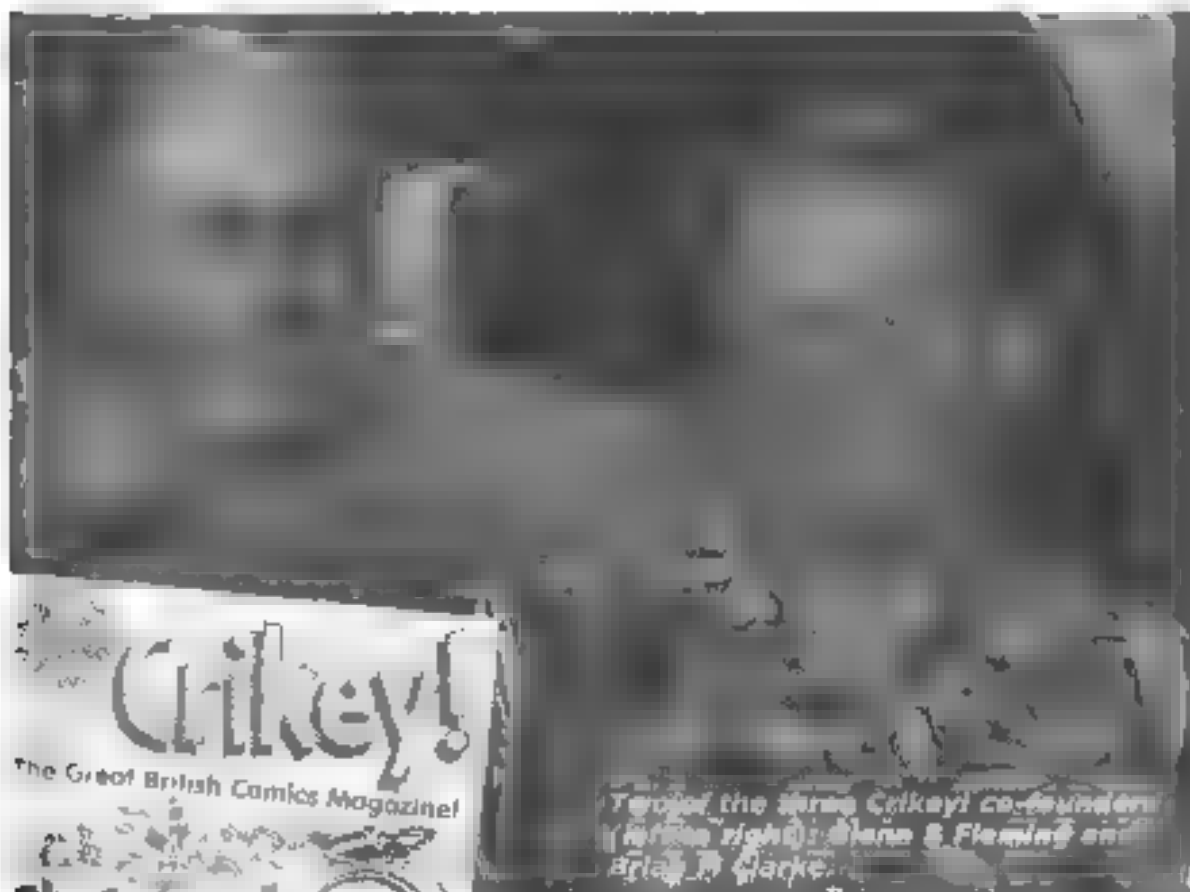
There seemed to be a bit of antipathy towards personal nostalgia in the letters page. Personally I like to see comics set in their social background and would hate a more train-spotting list approach

Ray
rayaspden@ukgateway.net

Ray commented last issue on the design of issue one saying he found the layout confusing and asking us to give "complete frames/pages we can actually see and drool over in future issues". It was a comment made by a few other critics as well and we'll glad to read that Ray for one is pleased with the changes. Of course, we then went and spelt his name wrong.

Ray also mentioned the battering we took in the letters page over the amount of biographical and anecdotal material we included. I'm glad to say that we received a huge stack of emails and letters urging to keep the nostalgia elements at the core of Crikey. We're currently running about 75% in favour of having big chunks of nostalgia served with their facts and figures.

As you will see from the image at the below, the Atlantis story was indeed in Rocket. It was part of the 'Professor Jack Ransom discovers...' adventure series, better remembered as 'The Seabed Citadel'.



repeated a page later but at a smaller size

I'm here for the duration.

Aian Roberts, Derby

Welcome back, Andy. Over the past few months we've met many people at comic marts and events such as the Birmingham International Comics Show and the ABC Fair in London who are saying exactly the same about rediscovering British comics.

I think it helped that we launched at the same time as the BBC Comics Britannia series, but whatever else is going on out there in comicsland there appears to be a strong move towards British comics.

The duplication of the Escape... image came about when we were making the final amends. We wanted to move the image to match where it was mentioned in the text but in doing so, forgot to replace the original one. At least it shows you were paying attention.

Jim Crikey!

Ho-hum! The train-spotters want their lists and dates do they. This is what I want.

Big pictures

Variety.

Fun information.

Things I've never heard about before. Do all that and I'm a happy man.

Martin Knox

Peterborough

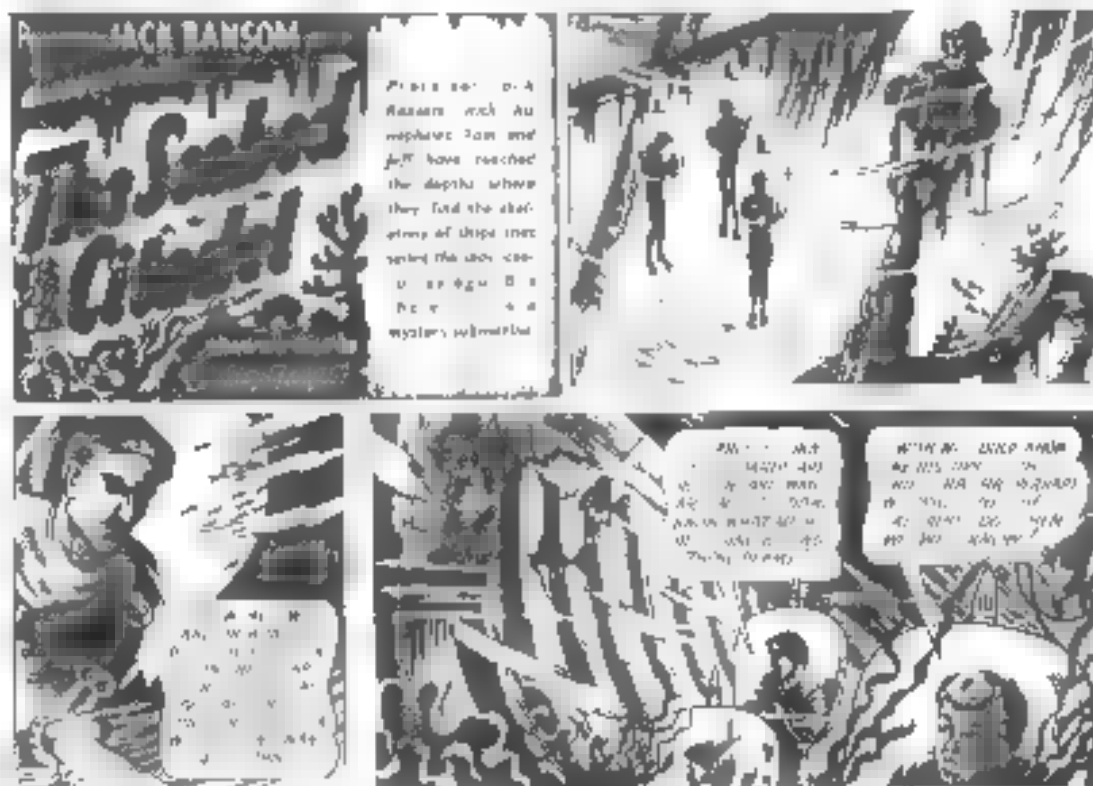
We've nothing against facts, Martin and whenever we can we want to credit artists

Um Crikey!

A copy of Crikey! finally made it through the disrupted mail system today, Monday, whether it's my subscription or contributor's copy I'm not sure.

Lots of good reading and references to characters both remembered and forgotten, as well as ones I'd never heard of. Great stuff, keep it coming.

Was it Rocket that had something about Atlantis on the back, with transparent diving suits which came down to the waist? I thought I had a sample copy, but I've obviously swopped it long ago as I couldn't find it. It's a small world, with



Um Crikey!

Thanks for the latest issue - more good stuff.

The Ron Embleton article cried out for colour, but I realise the cost implications and a mag like this should inspire us all to get out our old comics or to look around for some purchases.

I know that British comics are a lot more difficult to get hold of than their US counterparts, but old annuals (with plenty of colour illustrations by people like Lawrence, Bellamy and Embleton) are more common - check out charity shops.

Steve Holland's piece on ownership got a bit muddled (even more than the subject demanded) - is the 'Getting there' printed as written? 'cause it confused me (further).

And Steve didn't really get to the crux of the matter - i.e. the rights to reprint so many of our favourites are tied up so much that it's a nightmare (although the recent Titan books on *The Spider* and *The Steel Claw*, and the *Trigan Empire* and forthcoming 'Karl the Viking' show that it can be done).

To end, anyone remember a series of comic digests - mid 60s - *Top Three*, *Radar* and *Pecos Bill*? I think they were translated from originals somewhere in Europe and were a mixture of colour and b&w pages. Ring any bells?

Looking forward (already) to issue 3,
Geraint Davies
Internet

And you're in it. Again!

The Steve Holland piece appears to have either fascinated or killed cold anyone reading it. I think it all depends on the level and type of detail you want. As a trained historian it's perfect for me. But even in the Crikey! shed there has been looks of confusion. I remember Radar and Top Three, Geraint - but not enough to say anything sensible or constructive about them.

No change there, then.

Um Crikey!

I read comics but they are not my whole life. Keep the anecdotal side to the writing.

My favourite feature is probably 'Nutty Notions'. Maybe because it's an easy read and makes me smile. Another thing I like is the old ads. Find a few more and stick them in. I like my football so the 'Phew! What a Scorchers' article was perfect for me. Even the sub-titles were good.

You even had two articles that I almost skipped by but ended up liking - the one about British comics in France and the

one about winning a coat.

Can't believe I read an article about winning a coat!

And then there was the Daleks.

Keep things simple and fun and I'll stay with you.

Andrew Burgess
Salford



I'm not a football fan but even I enjoyed the Scorchers piece. You can always sucker me in with a robot, a kangaroo kid or the odd bit of mind-control.

Hi Brian,

Crikey! What a brilliant publication. Thank you for sending along Issue 1 of The Great British Comics Magazine! (I have just sent payment via PayPal for issues 2 and 3).

I didn't really know quite what to expect to see in *Crikey!* My first thought was that it was going to be a publication similar to DCT's *Classics from the Comics*, which I buy regularly. But no. What I got to see instead was page after page of superb news items, that remind me of yesteryear. And I must add that the print and paper quality used is first class (not to be confused with the Post Office's meaning of the words 'first class'!).

A bit about me: I am 42-years-old, and back in the 1970s I was a big fan of British comics, never really caring for the American Marvels & co. I preferred IPC's productions to that of DCT's. I had five paper rounds in the Seventies, and all the money I earned was spent on comics. Not only did I love reading them but, and this WILL sound weird, I also enjoyed sniffing the print and nibbling the paper! Now that was true love!

One of my favourite IPCers was *Roy of the Rovers*. Strangely, I was never a big fan of sport in the '70s but Roy, well, he was the 1970s Jesus. One thing I recall was the Roy Race Phone-in, or was it the Roy Race Phone line? Whichever, the comic invited readers to dial a London 01 number each week (no rip-off premium rates back then!) to hear Roy's spokesman/manager - some fella at IPC anyway, giving fans up-to-date info about Roy and Melchester Rovers! Brilliant!

And then there was 'na-na-na-na-na

Look-In', so went the TV ad jingle. This publication was forever trying to get shot of Raleigh Chopper cycles in its competitions. I wanted a bike. A Raleigh bike. And it had to be a Chopper! How many times I sent off my entry details on postcards to win a Chopper. And how many times I didn't win that bike! My mam and dad's fault; they, for some reason, gladly bought me racing cycles, but refused point blank to buy me a Chopper. Was it the money? Wasn't their poor son worthy of being bought the coolest bike the world has ever witnessed?! I have still not forgiven my parents to this very day!

But back to the comics. *Cheeky Weekly* and *Krazy* were simply abnormal, especially the latter which, in my opinion, was way ahead of its time. The artists/writers must have fallen down to earth from another planet! Absolutely hilarious! And I can tell you that I had more than a soft spot for Lily Pop! If only she had been the lollipop lady outside my school gates.

Buster, *Monster Fun*, *Topper*, *Beezer*, *Action!*, *Shiver & Shake*, *Whoopee!* - the list is endless. Alas, when we moved out of the house in 1986, which I had lived in from 1964 when I was born, I committed the ultimate crime. I threw away the hundreds of comics I had neatly stored in a spare room. All gone. Forever. I wish I still had them.

And finally - a recent survey concluded that many UK school kids are, in a nutshell, illiterate. Apparently they are unable to read. Lack of comics, see. Not only were comics fun, they were also educational. Kids these days are welcome to their computers and other gizmos. I'm just glad I was around in the 1970s to appreciate all that fine work found in the great British comics.

Doug Sharrard,
Leicester

When I worked at Fleetway Editions as an editor and writer I was on the next desk to Dave Hunt, editor of Roy of the Rovers. He confessed to me during a lunchtime meeting around the local that he was the voice on the other end of the line.

Sniffing comics and books isn't weird, Doug. Eating them - well that is something different.

See you next issue - don't forget we're going bi-monthly, so the next Crikey! will be on sale in March! See you then. ●

Crikey!

**Subscribe
today!**

FREE UK postage!

6 issues for the price of 5!

A SIX issue subscription is just £19.95. Payment through PayPal via the website (www.crikeyuk.co.uk) or send a cheque payable to Sequential Media at 4 Hillsborough Drive, Unsworth, Bury BL9 8LE. Please state at which issue you want your subscription to begin. Issue 4 will be on sale March 2008 (the first of our bi-monthly issues).

Overseas subscription:

You still get **SIX** issues for the price of **FIVE** - but we have to include six times the postage.

Surface mail - anywhere:

SIX issues for £19.95 (saving you £3.99) plus six times postage at £1.50 = **£28.95 in total**.

Airmail:

Still **SIX** issues for £19.95

PLUS

United States of America/Canada/Australia

Six times £2.70 = £16.20. (**£36.15 in total**).

Continental Europe:

Six times £1.70 = £10.20. (**£30.15 in total**).

Back Issues

UK Orders:

Issue 1 & 2 are available for £3.99 each - **FREE** postage and packing.

Payment through PayPal via the website

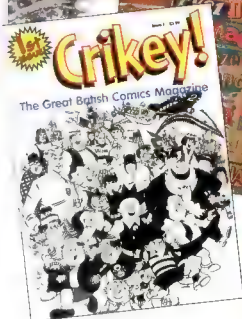
(www.crikeyuk.co.uk) or send a cheque payable to Sequential Media at 4 Hillsborough Drive, Unsworth, Bury BL9 8LE.

Overseas Orders:

Surface mail £5.50 each, inc. p&p.

Airmail £6.70 each, inc. p&p.

Payment through PayPal only via the website (www.crikeyuk.co.uk).



**Next Issue
on Sale
March**

A SECRET SO INCREDIBLE THAT IF WE TOLD YOU ...



WE'D HAVE TO KILL YOU!

FROM THE PUBLISHERS OF

Crikey!

ON SALE APRIL 2008

• u e r t a i m e d a . c o m

WANTED

BRITISH WEEKLY COMICS : FREE GIFTS
COLLECTIONS : BOUND VOLUMES
WATCHES | TOYS RELATING TO COMICS
& COMIC STRIP CHARACTERS
ITEMS RELATING TO SPACE / MOONSHOTS
ORIGINAL ARTWORK

WANTED
CANADIAN COMICS
especially
MAPLE GROUP
TITLES & OTHER
BLACK & WHITE
COMICS

WANTED
AUSTRALIAN
COMICS
especially
ORIGINAL
AUSTRALIAN
CHARACTERS

WE SELL
ORIGINAL
ARTWORK
ASK FOR OUR LISTS!

ON TARGET
WITH
Blaze
(Pronounced
Blar-zay)

... and don't forget we
also sell our own self
published books for collectors
including **NOSTALGIA ABOUT**
COMICS, WOLF PHANTOM
COMICS SELECTION & FUN FILMS!
Coming in 2008:-

GREAT BRITISH FANTASY COMIC
BOOK HEROES plus Mike Morley's
PICTORIAL GUIDE TO 1950's SPACE
& HORROR COMICS - Keep checking
with us for further developments.

WATCH
OUT
FOR



UGLY
DUCKLING
PRESS

Blaze

BLAZE BOOKS, Haslemoor, Breckford Rd.,
Redditch B97 6PU, U.K.

Email:
blasebooks@aol.com

Crikey! Editorial

Brian M Clarke Editor

Glenn B Fleming Designer

Tom Sweetman Publicist

Contents:

Nutty Notions	2-3
Brian M Clarke once again explores the wackiest, zaniest comic pages he could lay his hands on ... well, this issue anyway!	
When Space was Ace	4-8
The clue is in the title - and Mike Morley proves the point	
Let's look At ...	9-11
Brian M Clarke takes an all too close look at a fifteen issue (was that all there was?!) British phenomenon from the '80s - <i>Scream!</i>	
Smashing Times	12-17
Stephen Poppitt recalls the influence of one of Britain's best adventure and humour comics.	
The Crikey Chat - Dez Skinn	18-23
Mark Saunders chats with legendary publisher Dez Skinn about the '70s periodical <i>House of Horror</i> in a revealing interview.	
My Comic Hero - Don Lawrence	24-29
Don Lawrence: unsung, unappreciated, neglected? Not by Glenn B Fleming (another unsung, unappreciated and neglected artist)!	
Adam Eterno	30-32
Captain Storm takes a dip back in time to one of the best, yet little remembered heroes of comics.	
My Comicy Saturday	20-22
Tom Sweetman reminds us of the children we once were in this candid and uplifting reminder of his own Saturday mornings.	
Top 10 Annuals	36-39
An extensive view of the UK's Rarest Comic Annuals - according to Bob Norton	
Fireball XL5	42-45
Tom Sweetman takes us into the darker side of <i>Fireball XL5</i> and looks at the 2065 assassination of the Astran leader: the Kaplan	
Um Letters	46-48
<i>Crikey!</i> readers have their say yet again!	

Crikey! Chum of the Month is **Bob Norton** for being so generous with his time, collection and charm.

Writers this issue:

Captain Storm, Tom Sweetman, Glenn B Fleming, Brian M Clarke, Mike Morley, Stephen Poppitt, Mark Saunders and Bob Norton.

Advertising rates:

Back cover in colour £250. Inside covers in colour £150.

Full page b/w £75. Half page b/w £45.

Quarter page b/w £30. Eighth of a page b/w one million pounds.

Please supply camera ready artwork on disk or PDF. If artwork is required, a charge will be made - please contact for details.

Note: The closing date for booking ads for issue four is 1 February 2008.

Crikey! is a Sequential Media publication.

4 Hillsborough Drive, Unsworth, Bury. BL9 8LE

Website: www.crikeyuk.co.uk

Artwork used to illustrate articles is used for illustration purposes only and remains the property of the copyright holders.

All original features are the copyright of the respective author/authors.

Crikey! chums...

It's been very busy here in the *Crikey!* shed. Not only have we been working hard on this 'ere issue of *Crikey!*, but we have also been preparing ourselves for our big launch across the pond in America and Canada. So a big hello to our American and Canadian pals!

Some of you new ones will have an idea already about British comics. Just to set the scene for those who know nowt, here's a very quick introduction to British comics.

Most were published weekly and were often in two or three page installments. Adventure strips were part of on-going serials (think *Flash Gordon*, *Radio Ranch*, etc but in strip form).

Some of them were bloody weird. As you will find out in the issues to come, there were lots of great artists and writers.

A single comic would have war, crime, humour, sport, SF, fantasy, historical and supernatural stories to make up the 32 or 36 page edition.

The rest you'll pick as we up as we go along.

Great news for all our readers!

From this issue we are converting to bi-monthly status. That means issue four will be on-sale in March.

Apology

Due to an editorial mix-up we mistakenly announced in our previous issue that artist/writer Terry Bave had died. I am delighted to say that this is completely unfounded and that Terry is indeed alive and well.

Our deepest apologies to Terry, his family and his legion of fans.

It was, as usual, all my fault.

We hope you enjoy this issue. Send your comments to the *Crikey!* website (www.crikeyuk.co.uk) or direct to me at beeemcee@aol.com.

If you want to get involved with *Crikey!* send your ideas to the shed. Maybe you fancy doing your own *Comicy Saturday* ...

**Cheers,
Brian**

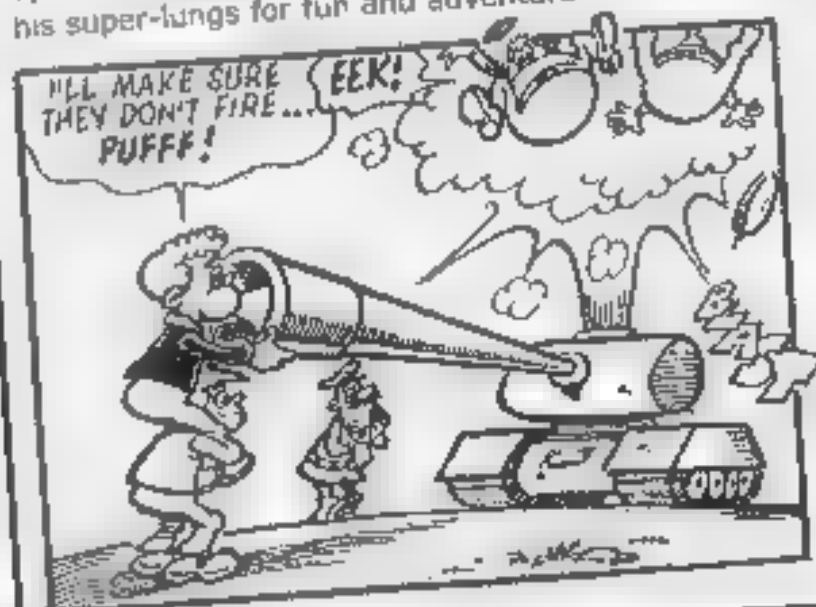
Nutty Notions

Each issue of Crikey! features a selection of some of the lovingly bizarre concepts that have graced the pages of British comics in years past. Ideas and nominations for future NNs gratefully accepted through the Crikey! website (www.crikeyuk.co.uk), click 'contact' and away you go! Enjoy!

Billy Blow
Buster 1981
Rob Lee

Comic characters come in all shapes and sizes with a wide range of abilities. Billy Blow certainly had a special power that set him apart because just like the Big Bad Wolf, Billy was very good at blowing. (Stop giggling at the back!) young Billy would blow anything that came his way in those innocent days.

Week after week artist/writer Rob Lee (who also gave us the decidedly weird H. De H. Hi Di Hoo in Wow - more about that in a future issue) came up with inventive ways for the breathy boy to use his super-lungs for fun and adventure.



Kid Chameleon
Corll 1970-4

Joe Colquhoun

The Kid was in reality an English schoolboy who had benefited from an unfortunate accident. A plane he was on as a baby had crashed in the Kalahari desert and by the time Tagasee the Wise One had reached him dozens of chameleon lizards were looking after him. As they licked the sickly baby a sticky fluid from their tongue coated his body with a protective skin.



As he grew, all reptiles became his friend and he learnt how to speak to them in a series of tongue-clicks.

In an effort get even closer to his reptile chums he even made himself a skin-tight lizard suit which enabled him to change colour at will.

And in case you want to know what language reptiles speak - Hoiko! Slikka! Yok, yok! are apparently popular phrases.



Danny's Tranny
The Topper

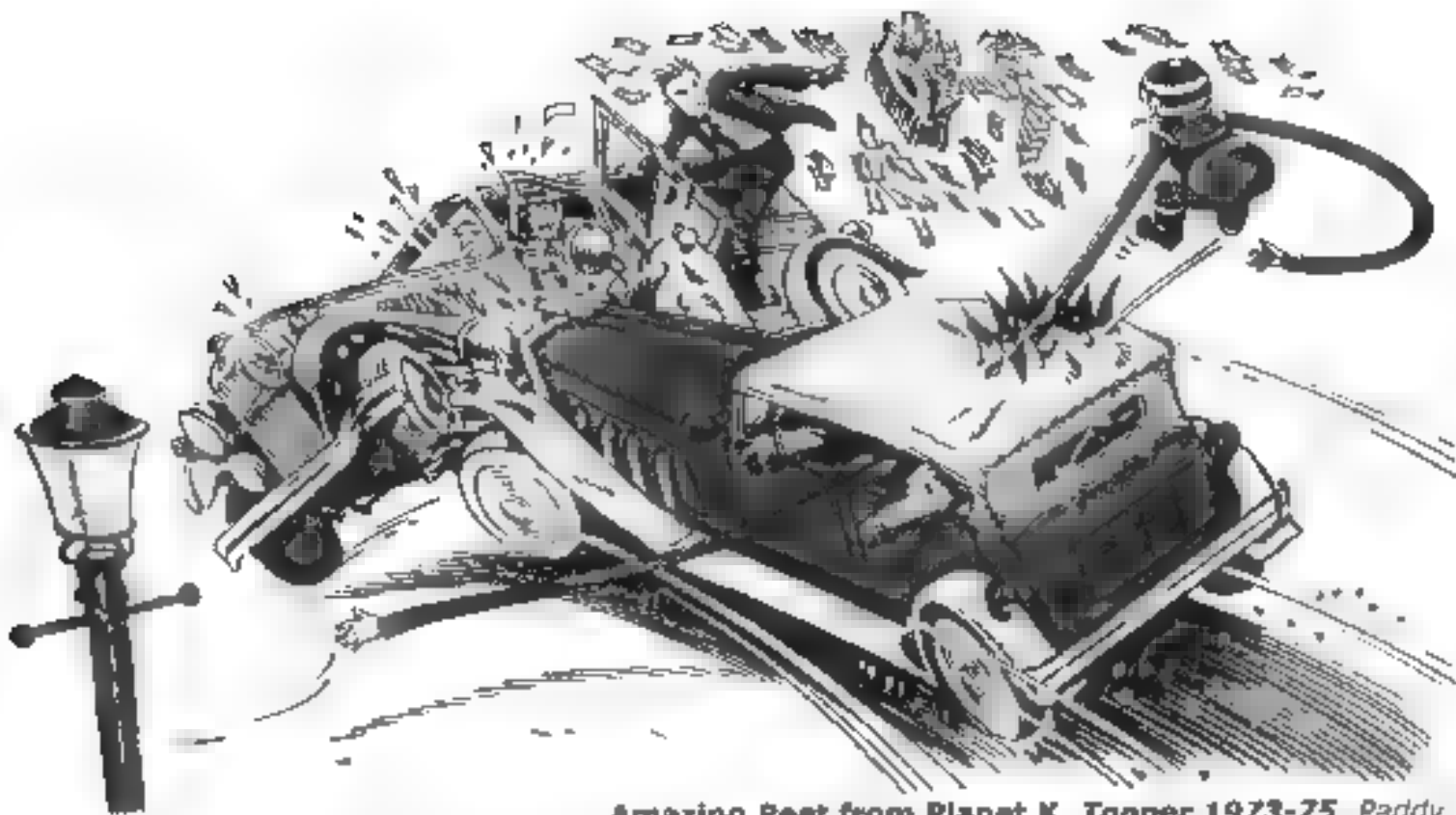
There was a time when no self-respecting teenager would be seen without their beloved transistor radio. Not only was it a lifeline to the world of pop, fashion and cool hip speak - it was a badge of belonging to that great Youth Movement that swept the world.

Of course some transies were better than others. Most gave you light, medium and long wave but Danny Wilson's gave him a lot more than bandwidth selection.

Danny's tranny, in the words of Chandler Bing 'Too many jokes!' allowed him to make objects larger, smaller, lighter than air or even invisible.

Switch the dial to light wave and that cute rabbit became King Kong Bunny. Switch to VHF and things would simply vanish.

The only thing we didn't see Danny do with his radio was actually play music.



Amazing Peet from Planet K *Topper 1973-75* Paddy Brennan

Banished to Earth for a year from Planet K for stealing food from King Klute's royal fruitonium, the ever-hungry Peet is staying with the Stenson family of Rodford, Eng and'

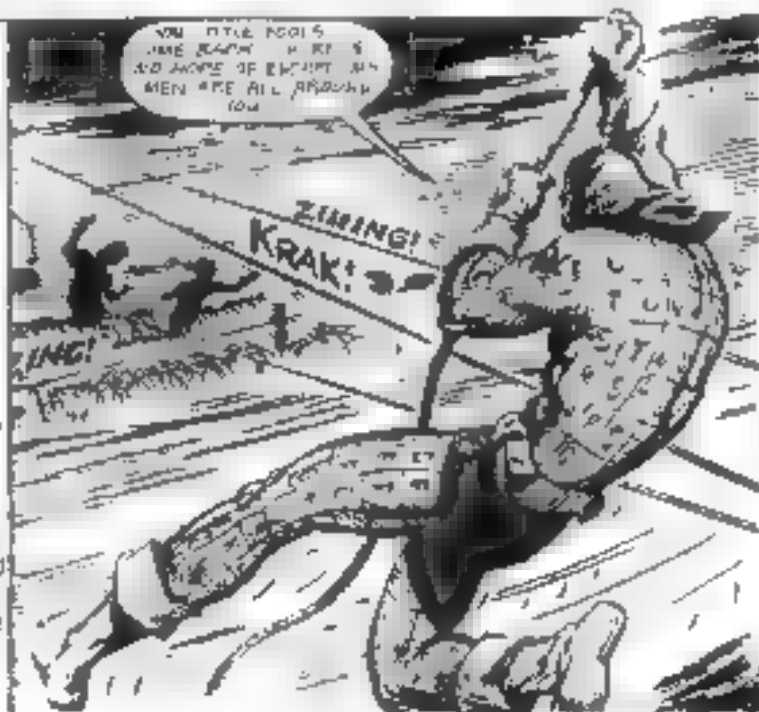
As if that wasn't enough to kick start the fun and adventures, Peet's under instructions to obey all orders given to him by Earthlings. On top of that, he's invented a home-made time machine and had the misfortune to expose himself and schoolboy Stan Stenson 'to a dose of unstable K-time waves - which means that without warning, they can be suddenly whisked through time' And did I mention that he had unfearably stretchy arms?

Menace of the Alpha Man

Shiver and Shake 1974
Alpha Man was actually the baddie in this action-packed can-you-solve-it first strip.

Penny Carter and Jamie Robertson are trying to capture the Alpha Man (in his alphabet super villain costume) who had kidnapped Penny's scientist dad.

The weird bit came with Alpha Man's need to use certain weapons in his crimes. When the initial letter from each weapon was taken and rearranged into a word it would spell the crooks name. Not the best way to prolong your criminal career!



Nobby

Buzz 1974

To be honest, there isn't anything particularly nutty about the notion of Nobby. Essentially he was the Beezer's Ginger with a change of hair colour.

There is, however, a certain juvenile delight in the design of the splash page for young Nobby.

NOBBY



THE WRISTLET GRANT WORE EFFECTED THIS CHANGE



Grant (C.I.D.)

Eagle 1968

'Detective-constable Grant has the secret power of being able to change into Smokeman.'

Through the aid of a strange bracelet (explain that in the manly showers, Grant) he was able to become a man-shaped wisp of smoke.

It got him out of several jams okay but he always had to keep one eye open for office fans and, presumably, call in sick on windy days.

DICK
BARTON
ILLUSTRATED
MY LIFE

COMET
EVERY MONDAY

ASSICS
Illustrated
Stories by the
author

THE WAR OF
THE WORLDS

When Space

I first started collecting comics in 1962 when I was eight years old. My father used to come home from work on a Monday evening, bringing me the *3d Comet*. Being already fascinated by anything to do with space or spaceflight, I always opened up the comic to 'The Sky Explorers', created by Ray Parfitt, where Professor Jolly and his nephew and niece Ann and Peter cruised through the Feltly Sky. The *Comet* with its bright red cover and brilliant James logo was the high spot of my week.

'The Sky Explorers' ran for many issues in full colour on the middle two pages and back cover and in their career they saved Queen Alice from the rebel Prince Grimbolt, met the Sun-Folk and fought and beat the Hawk, a space pirate. They were also captured by monkey folk, battled against the Flame People and visited the planet Rama, where inhabitants dressed like ancient Romans, and with the help of the good emperor, defeating our ferocious overthrown Cambusa, a wicked tyrant.

'The Sky Explorers' was later replaced by 'Dick Barton and the Flying Saucer Mystery' and a second Barton adventure 'Peril on the Moon'. When I was nine years old I left the complete run of *Comets* on a bus, on my way to visit a relative. I never did get them back.

Space Crazes

In the early 1950s, at around seven or eight years old, I bought up as many space comics as I could get my hands on from two local market stalls. Also on cold winter evenings, I'd 'borrow' 6d from my mother, having just sold a comic at the newspaper shop on my way to school, and run down the lane to the store to collect it. On my return I would read it a page at a time under lamp-posts leading the way back home.

I have two 1/3d *Charles Illustrated* comics, 'War of the Worlds' and 'The Time Machine' in my collection. These made such a strong impression on me that I went out and bought Walter's book *The War of the Worlds* and began to discover science fiction elsewhere as well as comics. I had also heard from a neighbour how good the George Pal movie of the story was. Being very young I could not get into this then X-rated film, so I hung onto her every word and re-read the comic.

Around that time comics were on sale at Woolworths. On market days my mum and I would visit town and I would choose a comic at that big shop. These were spread in glorious disorder on the counter top, not neatly but all in a loose pile. All sorts of comics and books were mixed together and I remember my

SWIFT MORGAN

MYSTERY IN SPACE

6d
NO 2

was Ace!

By Mike Morley

excitement as I unearthed a 6d Swift Morgan Space Comic. This was issue 50 in the series and featured 'Swift Morgan and the Planet of Booby'. The second tale was called 'Bark English, Museum Rover'. It has a superb cover with inside artwork by Denis McLaughlin.

The cover shows a large green-ringed yellow and orange-striped planet in the background. The terrain, belonging to one of its moons is pictured below, in the foreground, and is coloured a vivid red, with craters and peaks and earthlike clouds above. From the right moves a large blue strangely-winged spaceship, its passengers and crew seen clearly through the front windows. A still smaller red vessel is entering from top-right, and firing at the large blue spaceship.

Space Pace

The other comics we bought in Weeknights were Swift Morgan's Speedways Comic and Ray Carson Comics. These were printed in orange and contained one story featuring the title character. All were superbly drawn by Denis McLaughlin and published by T.V. Boardman's Popular Press. The Swift Morgan tales all centred on chapters from the space serials playing at the Saturday morning matinees: 'The Last World', 'The Ancient

Romans', 'The Ancient Egyptians', 'The Feathered Serpent', 'Atlantis', 'The Flying Saucers'. And the Ray Carson titles provided just as much two-rated adventure: 'Smashing the Crime Wave', 'Moss Chosen', 'Jethro Again', 'Vermin the Marquis', 'The Cornish Smugglers' and 'The Educated Art'.

One of the best films of the early 1960s was When Worlds Collide directed by Rudolph Mates. I saw this film as a child and a few weeks later was able to buy the Pawsell/Peller black and white 6d reprint comic (Pawsell/Hobbs Picture comic 66, reprinted from the coloured American original issue 110). This comic vividly recaptured those frightening end-of-the-world scenes from the film and I am lucky to have this reprint in my collection today, as it brings back not only memories of itself, when I first had a copy, but also of that wonderful film.

Space Ace

A grand English-produced comic was Spaceport, Comics of the Future published by Gould and Light was available from the local newsagent. Each starred Captain Future and had a smashing cover by Norman Light and used original English comics, not reprints of American material.



Extremely well-drawn, these comics ran until issue 15. Each Captain Future story had a one-page intro on the inside front cover and showed splendidly detailed spaceships and spacemen in action. Issue 14 contained a story called 'Pets' about a group of aliens who keep human beings as pets. The inspiration for this tale appears to have been drawn from a lovely Wally Wood tale in E.C.'s *Weird Science* 12 called 'A Gobi is a Kneg's Best Friend'.

A similar comic to *Spaceman* was *Star-Rocket*, another all-English production. One story in issue 2, which particularly impressed me as it paralleled the then filmic obsession for mutated and enlarged insect-monsters, was 'It Came from Uranus' with superb artwork by Ron Embleton.

One of my favourite 6d space comics was *Mystery in Space* published by L. Miller. Issue 2 has a grand cover which really excited me as a child, showing two helmeted spacemen and a gasping female at the controls of a spaceship. They are looking out into the wild, blue yonder where the earth has turned into an enormous cube. It's rolling around like some huge dice, with earthly continents instead of spots. At that time, as a small child, just the strangeness of that idea allowed all sorts of dreams and fantasies to emerge.

Those early 1950s comics really encouraged the opening up of our imaginative faculties. Most of the tales

in *Mystery in Space*, reprinted from the American colour originals, concerned a problem or puzzle to be solved, hence the title and seemed, then, grand exercises in logic. A story in issue 3 titled 'The Interplanetary Merry-Go-Round' helped us to see that nothing is as clear-cut as it might first appear with the evil protagonist simultaneously being the benefactor.

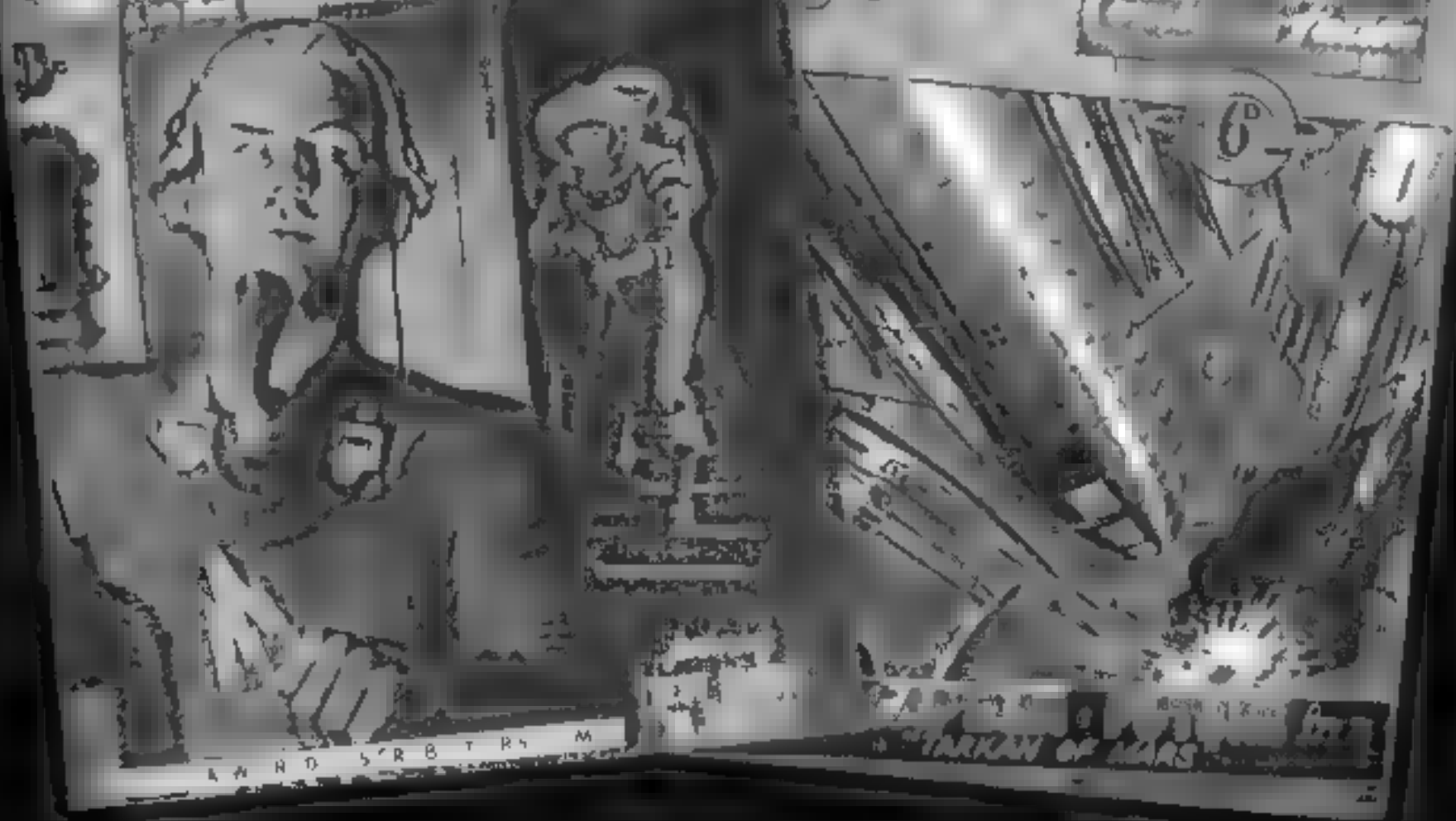
Space Race

Miller also published the reprint *Space Adventures* which ran for five issues but numbered issues 50 to 55. A good deal of these English reprints appeared to have run for many more issues than was actually the case, often starting with issue 1 renumbered 50 or 51.

Space Adventures 50, a reprint of American edition 7 of that same series, has a super cover showing a crashed and ruined spaceship on Mars. Its two occupants, a man and a woman, stand at the side, having barely escaped from the ship. This was an illustration for the lead story 'Transformation', about a sex-change on Mars! Surely a first for British comics!

Sports Cartoon Comics published a good series of all-English issues with such titles as *Strange Worlds*, *Steve Samson* and *Captain Vigour*. *Strange Worlds* 8 has a nice robot story starring Hal Starr in 'The Mystery of the 14th Galaxy'. Each issue had a small union-jack on the front proudly proclaiming 'A British Comic'.

FLASH GORDON SPACEMAN



The Arnold Book Company introduced us to Captain Universe, another 6d comic. This excellent publication (in my opinion) only lasted for two issues. Issue 1 contained 'Captain Universe and the Horror Planet of Cocculus' plus a detective tale and a western. Captain Universe seems to be rather similar to Captain Marvel, or as he was later called, Marvelman. His magic word was neither SHAZAM! nor KIMOTAI but the decidedly less inspiring GALAPI.

The lead story is a nice idea of minute spaceships gradually entering to disgorge horrible space monsters bent on destroying earth. Captain Universe eventually promotes their rapidly dwindling planet in the fires of 'the hottest star in the galaxy'.

Another comic that began and ended with issue 1 was Space Worlds, though this was a reprint from the American issue 6, published by Atlas. It was printed in black and white and red and contained tales of Captain Jet Dixon of the Space Squadron. The exciting lead story is 'Tempest of Jupiter' where a member of an expedition to the planet Jupiter is beguiled into removing his space-helmet by a voluptuous young woman and visions of gorgeous countryside. When he removes his space helmet, however, the planet's environment reverts back to all-consuming flames. It is then that we learn that the woman is the evil planet personified, confusing and finally destroying unwary and unwelcome visitors.

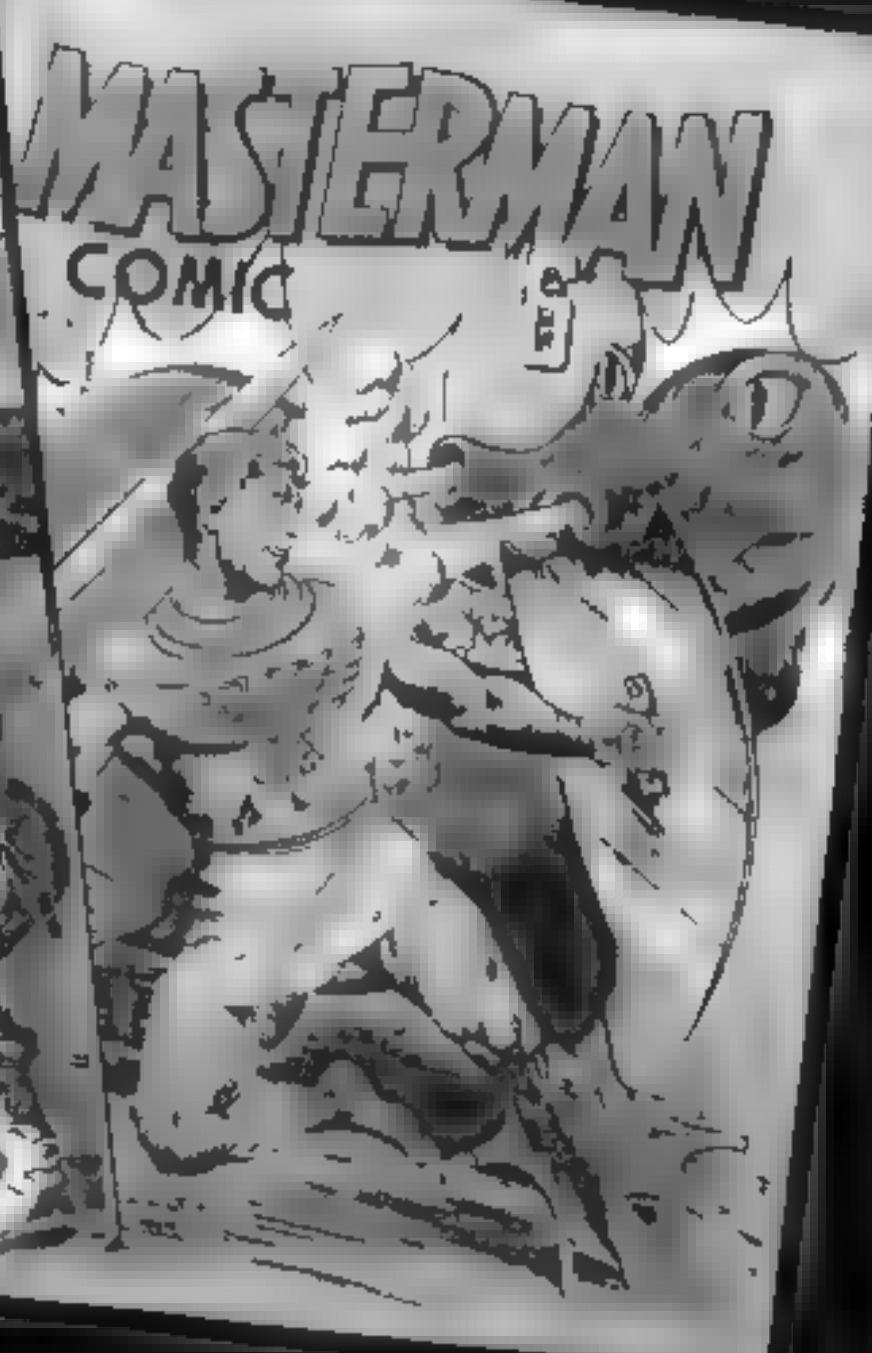
Space, or, Face

Pemberton's (W.D.L.) reprinted several issues of Lev. Gleason's excellent Daredevil comic. Issue 5 has a very well drawn Little Wise Guys story called 'Speed and Space', about an anti-gravity substance used to propel a spaceship to Mars, where The Wise Guys discover huge insects and very tiny humanoids.

'Twin Earths', an American newspaper strip, was reprinted over here as 18 issues of Space Travellers. The cover of the first issue shows a huge flying saucer against a black background. This comic has the continuing and varied adventures of a boy from Texas who shows away on a flying saucer from Terra, earth's twin planet. The cover to issue 2 shows two boys using portable flying machines, hovering over two large prehistoric-looking monsters.

Space Commands, Space Commander Kerry and Captain Valiant Space Comics were three more all-British productions. Captain Valiant was a Mick Angelo/Gower St Studios production published by the Arnold Book Company. Several of these were often stapled together and sold as 'bumper editions'.

'Speedsmith', 'Trouble Shooter' and the 'Now It Can Be Told' series were drawn by Denis Gifford. There were also many one page fiction articles, presented as true, showing aliens and spaceships and strange 'facts' from other planets.



Space Waste

W.D.L.'s *Tom Corbett, Space Cadet* was again a reprint of an American original and ran for 11 issues. The first five or six issues were printed in sepia on white, the remainder in black and white. On comparing these 1950's reprints with the American Dell four colour originals, it is interesting to note that three or four pages are missing in the English edition. These were replaced by a short text résumé at the beginning of the story to fill in English readers with what was shown in strip form to fellow-fans in the States. On the front inside cover there was often a photo-article on the Space Academy. Presented as fact, the photographs added to its authenticity.

Another W.D.L. space comic was *Flesh Gordon*. Despite his fame, it ran for only three issues. Issue 3 has a tremendous whole-page drawing of a massive doughnut-shaped space station crashing to earth in flames and is reminiscent of the film footage of the doomed airship *Hindenberg*. It even has tiny figures running madly to escape, just as in the real live airship situation.

John Carter of Mars, again reprinted by W.D.L. ran for only 2 issues. Issue 1 has a grand cover showing a rather woody-looking John Carter fighting a four-armed green Thark. It seems a bit unfair really as John only has one sword and the Thark has four, but right is on our hero's side and John wins the day.

Another all-English comic was *Masterman*. The cover of

one issue has a bearded figure, looking rather like Alfie Bass, brandishing a sword at a fire-breathing dragon.

From 1951 to 1954 I used to spend the last couple of hours before bedtime with a large pile of comics on my arm, visiting every house in the neighbourhood, asking if there was anyone living there who had any comics to swap. I swapped hundreds of comics in this way. I'd read them in bed before sleeping and then re-swap them the next evening.

Just looking at the strange output of titles from British comics publishers and creators proves that even in the strange sub-genre of space comics, the British can out-weird the best of them!

Mike Marley will be back next issue when he discusses the early history of British black and white horror comics.

Don't miss it!

Let's Look at...

No. 11 Every Monday
2nd June 1984

22

Available for free from
the Mail on Sun.
£1.50 per copy

SCARY STORIES TO MAKE YOU SHIVER!

GHOSTS!

NOT
FOR THE
NERVOUS!

Meet The **DEMON DENTIST**
in **TALES FROM
THE GRAVE**

It may have lasted for only 15 issues - but that's all it has taken to create a legend of British horror comics greatness. *Scream* launched with a free pair of green glow-in-the-dark fangs and Ghastly McNasty was the eerie editor of this weird weekly. Its sense of horror came from all eras - from the gothic setting of the *Tales From The Grave* feature to the futureworld environment of a wired and alive computer in *The Thirteenth Floor*.
Turn the page - if you dare!!!



Dracula File by G. Finley-Day (Script) and E. Bradbury (Art) - Drac's back and this time it takes on Cold War overtones with both the British and Soviet intelligence services involved.



Terror of the Cats by Simon Furman (Script) and J. Richardson (Art) - something has happened to our domestic cats, turning them into killer cats!



Nighcomers by Tom Tully (Script) and J. Richardson (Art) - brother and sister set out to investigate the deaths of their ghost-hunting parents. So they go to Raven's Meet, a mysterious haunted house ...



Tales From The Grave by Tom Tully and S. Goodall (Script) and J. Watson (Art) - multi-part mini-series of mostly Victorian horror as related to the reader by the loathsome Leper.

monster



Monster by Rick Clark - an Alan Moore pseudonym (Script) and Redondo (Art) - a boy and his monster (actually his mis-shapen uncle) on the run and looking for a cure for whatever it was that deformed his uncle in the first place.



Fiends and Neighbours - a reprint from Carl comic but it fitted in well and made for a nice change of pace. A normal family live next door to a family of monsters in a quiet suburban street.

THE THIRTEENTH FLOOR



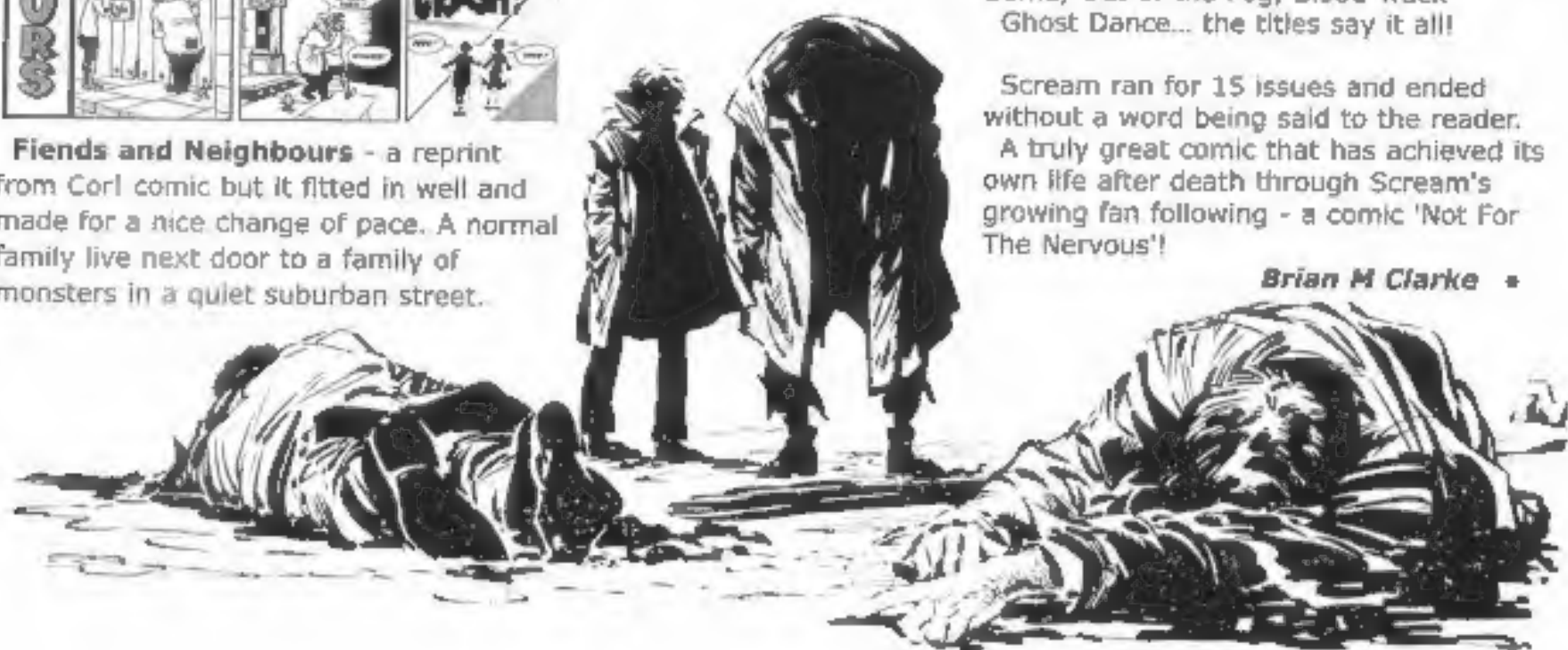
The Thirteenth Floor by Ian Holland (Script) and Ortiz (Art) - Max, the computer controlling Maxwell Towers tortures and/or kills those who don't live life by his moral code. So watch out loan sharks - an ironic death awaits!



Lots of one-off and short-run series such as Drowning Pool, Ghastly Tales, Behind the Door, Sea Beast, Unlucky For Some, Out of the Fog, Blood Track Ghost Dance... the titles say it all!

Scream ran for 15 issues and ended without a word being said to the reader. A truly great comic that has achieved its own life after death through Scream's growing fan following - a comic 'Not For The Nervous'!

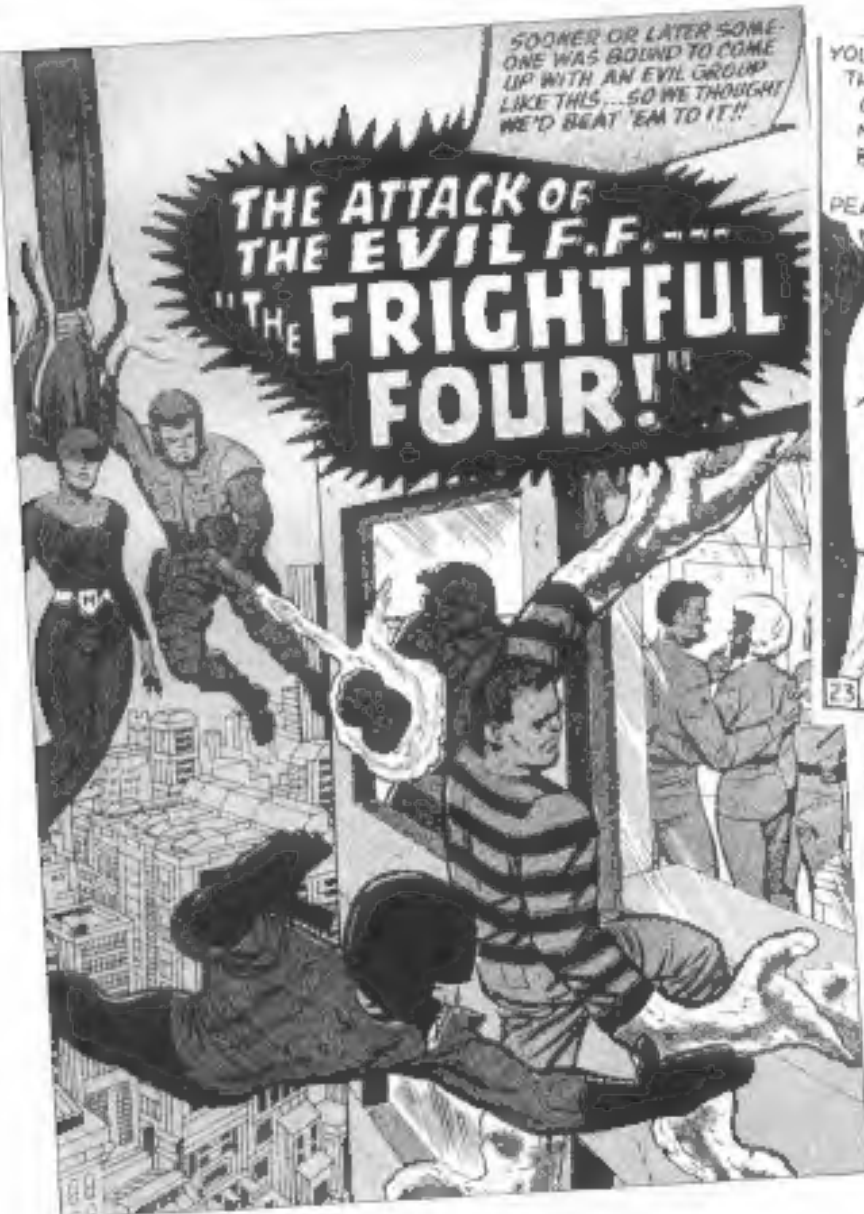
Brian M Clarke •



Smashing Times

by Stephen Poppitt

Between 1966 and 1969, Odhams Press had the British rights to the American superhero strips published by Marvel Comics. Odhams published several of those strips in their range of Power Comics and at their peak, in 1967, Odhams were publishing five Power Comics every week. However, Pow, Wham, Fantastic and Terrific were all destined to merge with their more robust sister Smash during 1968; and in the spring of 1969 Smash was sold to IPC, and the last Marvel superhero strip, 'The Fantastic Four', was withdrawn.



(Above): Stan Lee & Jack Kirby are refused entry to the wedding of Sue & Reed Richards (Wham!, July 1968). Left): The first appearance of The Frightful Four (July 1968). (Below): The Cloak v. Warlock - Pow! 53 (Jan 1968).

Smashing Heroes

Superhero strips were the mainstay of *Smash* for its first 167 issues, the period when it was published by Odhams. The main superhero series in *Smash* was 'The Fantastic Four', which had a curious real-life role to play in the story of *Smash* itself.

By 1968 the 'Fantastic Four' series had reached the struggle against the Frightful Four, which began with the wedding of Reed and Sue. This was an epic tale in which nearly every Marvel superhero of the time appeared as a guest at the wedding, while Dr Doom arranged for every supervillain in Marvel's stable to attack the Baxter Building, where the wedding was taking place (originally presented in Marvel's *Fantastic Four Annual 3*).

At the end of the story, Nick Fury insulted Stan Lee and Jack Kirby (Marvel's writer and artist respectively on the story) when, in a very surreal scene, they too turned up as wedding guests. Turning away from the door, Stan said to Jack: "We'll show 'em - let's get back to the office and start working on the next issue."



The editor of *Smash* then cunningly re-arranged the sequence of events. In terms of Marvel's real publishing history they were not to meet the Frightful Four for several more monthly issues of the American continuity. In the UK *Smash*, however, the editor re-ordered the storyline so that in the following weekly issue after the wedding, the FF was 'Defeated by the Frightful Four', making a nice transition from Stan's threat into their greatest defeat.

This began a sequence of events which took them to the atomic isle where the Frightful Four strand them, and detonate an atom bomb from which only Sue's invisible force field saves the fantastic foursome. The FF find the radiation from the bomb has wiped out their super-powers. This propels them into a climactic confrontation with Dr Doom, where Daredevil leads the powerless FF against their arch-enemy.

Because *Smash* lost all its superhero strips when IPC took over, the 'Fantastic Four' had to be carefully handled. It couldn't just stop in the middle of the battle with Dr Doom and, in fact, it was tied up quite neatly. The Fantastic Four defeated Doom, but at the cost of losing one of their number, The Thing, to the Frightful Four. The battle to rescue him from the evil FF was the final Fantastic Four story in *Smash*, concluding in the last Odhams issue.

To a large extent it determined the timing of IPC's purchase, since it would have been impossible to shorten the Fantastic Four story, and equally impossible to continue it into the next story, which was a hugely long and complex plot that introduced The Inhumans, climaxing with the arrival of Galactus to destroy the Earth.

One point on editorial matters. As mentioned, Stan Lee and Jack Kirby wrote and drew Marvel's FF, and actually appeared as themselves in the wedding story mentioned above. Notionally, however, the editorial team for *Smash* was Alf and Bart (strictly speaking, the editors of the Power Comics were Alf, Bart and Cos). This must have made it very difficult for readers at the time, who must have wondered who the hell Stan and Jack were when they turned up in the story, since Alf and Bart were the ones supposedly writing the series!

It was a feature of the Odhams comics that all markings on the strips identifying Marvel, or referring to the names of Marvel's writers and artists were removed. A fiction was maintained that Odhams were producing the superhero strips across all five titles. This was, of course, many years prior to Marvel publishing comics in the UK themselves, which didn't happen until the 1970s.

Marvel's original page layouts were cut up and re-arranged, to get more panels on a page, so that a lot of story material could be squeezed into two or three pages of *Smash* each week. But the stories were presented mostly intact, losing only an odd panel here and there due to constraints of space. And they always managed a good cliff-hanger ending each week, even though they were usually ending only part-way through a Marvel issue.

Odd Ham Humour

There were a lot of humorous strips in the Oldham run of *Smash*, many of them survivors from *Pow* and *Wham*,



'The Nervs' from *Smash* 45, December 1966.

with which *Smash* had merged.

Mike Brown's 'The Nervs' was a surreal strip about the little characters that inhabit a schoolboy called Fatty and showed them running their man-machine like a group of workers running a factory.

'The Man from BUNGLE' was a spoof of the popular The Man from UNCLE TV series. BUNGLE was a secret spy organisation for the British Government where The Man employed a wide variety of hugely unlikely secret gadgets in the fight against his humorous opponents.

'The Cloak' by Mike Higgs was another secret agent strip, this time about a character whose ingenuity and never-ending supply of gadgets and odd weapons were matched by the odd - and some were very odd - enemies he fought. These included not only Death Shed (well, that's what it sounded like, but it was probably meant to be Death's Head!) but also 'Lady Shady, the shady lady'. The strip also benefited from a very unusual, idiosyncratic, drawing style.

'Wiz War' was a delightful half-page strip devoted to the feud between two wizards: Wizard Prang and his enemy Demon Druid. (Wizard Prang is actually RAF slang, from the Second World War.) They would fly around on broomsticks, zapping each other with spells - which turned the other into a toad, or something equally amusing. The best feature of the strip was the sign above Wizard Prang's door, which usually read 'Wizard Prang is ... In' (if he was at home) or 'Wizard Prang is ... Out' (if he was out and about). But when he had a bad time in the story, in the final panel the sign would make